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Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General

Department of Health and Human Services

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This first-ever Surgeon General's Report on bone health and osteoporosis illustrates the large burden that bone disease places on our Nation and its citizens. Like other chronic diseases that disproportionately affect the elderly, the prevalence of bone disease and fractures is projected to increase markedly as the population ages. If these predictions come true, bone disease and fractures will have a tremendous negative impact on the future well-being of Americans. But as this report makes clear, they need not come true: by working together we can change the picture of aging in America. Osteoporosis, fractures, and other chronic diseases no longer should be thought of as an inevitable part of growing old. By focusing on prevention and lifestyle changes, including physical activity and nutrition, as well as early diagnosis and appropriate treatment, Americans can avoid much of the damaging impact of bone disease and other chronic diseases. In recognition of the importance of promoting bone health and preventing fractures, President George W. Bush has declared 2002–2011 as the Decade of the Bone and Joint. With this designation, the United States has joined with other nations throughout the world in committing resources to accelerate progress in a variety of areas related to the musculoskeletal system, including bone disease and arthritis. As a part of its Healthy People 2010 initiative, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has developed an important goal for Americans—to increase the quality and years of healthy life. Our hope is that Americans can live long and live well. Unfortunately, fractures—the most common and devastating consequence of bone disease—frequently make it difficult and sometimes impossible for people to realize this goal. HHS is committed to developing a wide array of creative and innovative approaches that can help make the goal of living long and living well a reality for Americans. Several programs of particular relevance to bone health include: The National Institutes of Health's Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases - National Resource Center. The National Resource Center provides timely information for health professionals, patients, and the public on osteoporosis, Paget's disease of bone, osteogenesis imperfecta, and other metabolic bone diseases; The National Bone Health Campaign. Targeted at 9- to 12-year-old girls and their parents, this campaign uses Web sites and other activities to promote nutritional choices and physical activities that benefit bone health; Steps to a HealthierUS Initiative. HHS launched this initiative in 2003 to advance the President's goal of helping Americans live longer, better, and healthier lives. At the heart of this program lies both personal responsibility for the choices Americans make and social responsibility to ensure that policymakers support programs that foster healthy behaviors and prevent disease. VERBTM. It's what you do. This national, multicultural, social marketing campaign encourages young people ages 9–13 to be physically active every day as a means of promoting overall health, including bone health. This Surgeon General's Report brings together for the first time the scientific evidence related to the prevention, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of bone disease. More importantly, it provides a framework for moving forward. The report will be another effective tool in educating Americans about how they can promote bone health throughout their lives.

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