



Keep Your Musculoskeletal System Healthy



A healthy musculoskeletal (MSK) system allows you to walk, run, exercise and go about the daily business of your life.

Here are nine ways to keep that system in shape.

1. Stay away from tobacco

Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen available to muscles and that limits exercise tolerance.

[Click to make a plan to quit tobacco.](#)

2. Add weight-bearing exercise and stretching

Keep muscles, tendons and ligaments flexible by stretching at least every 20 minutes throughout the day.

3. Keep blood pressure and cholesterol at safe levels

Research shows that people over 50 who have high blood pressure and high cholesterol are nearly twice as likely to have chronic back pain.



4. Maintain a healthy weight

Extra body weight can cause the body to fall out of alignment, putting undue stress on discs, bones, ligaments and tendons. Maintaining a healthy weight helps avoid back and leg pain, body stiffness and limited mobility, especially for older adults.



5. Live a balanced life and get proper sleep

There's more to life than work! Take time for activities you enjoy. Practice mindfulness. Yoga and tai chi are well-documented practices that improve muscle strength, flexibility and balance. Adequate sleep gives your body time to repair and build new muscle tissue.

6. Practice good posture

Good posture keeps your body in proper alignment, reducing strain. While standing with your feet flat on the floor, imagine a plumb line dropping from your ear to your shoulder, then continuing to the hips and to the floor. This also works when you're sitting. Imagine the line running from your hips to the floor.



7. Prevent osteoporosis

Weight-bearing exercises and a balanced diet are the best defense against osteoporosis. Leafy green veggies are great for calcium. Dairy, egg yolks, saltwater fish and sunshine boost your vitamin D. If you take a calcium supplement, choose one that includes magnesium and take it in divided doses. Avoid tobacco and alcohol. The Mayo Clinic reports that tobacco use and consuming more than two alcoholic drinks a day can contribute to weak bones and osteoporosis.



8. Protect your body

Wear your seat belt when in a car. Wear a helmet when on a motorcycle. Use proper protective headgear when engaged in sports like football, in-line skating, bicycling and horseback riding.

9. Be aware of medication side effects

Ask your doctor if any of your medications are known to weaken bones and increase your risk for osteoporosis. If so, your doctor can prescribe a bone-boosting medication.

Lifting and Stretching

Finding it harder as you age to bend over to pick something up? Is it increasingly difficult to turn your body when backing out of parking spots? As you age, your body's flexibility tends to decrease and that can put the brakes on your mobility. Stay safe and strong by incorporating these habits into daily activities.

Proper lifting



Increase flexibility

10 yoga poses you should do every day



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