

**GLOBE**

healthreport

HOW SENIORS CAN AVOID BREAKING BONES IN A FALL

A STAGGERING 30 percent of senior citizens who break their hip in a fall die within 12 months, doctors warn!

But experts say you can reduce your risk of a dangerous accident by taking simple steps to strengthen bones and prevent falls.

"The first thing to do is consult a rheumatologist and assess your bone density and risk of fractures," advises L.A. orthopedic surgeon Dr. Bal (Dr. Raj) Rajagopalan. "You may need medication to preserve the remaining bone density."

"About three in 10 of those who

suffer hip fractures die within a year from various causes due to immobility. Post-menopausal women tend to lose more bone density than men, so they are at greater risk. Of particular danger is breaking a hip, the largest weight-bearing joint in the body."



Florida Sen. Marco Rubio catches Nancy Reagan in 2011

Research shows nearly 40 percent of people ages 65 or older fall at least once a year, and up to 10 percent of the accident victims suffer a serious injury such as a hip fracture.

According to health experts, falls are actually a top cause of death and disability among seniors.

But Dr. L. Ray Matthews, director of critical care at Atlanta's Grady Hospital, says taking vitamin D supplements or getting 15 minutes of sunshine daily can help strengthen bones.

"My own mother was having multiple falls before treatment," he tells GLOBE. "She has improved dramatically since taking vitamin D supplements."

Walking an hour a day and lifting even light weights three times a week are two of the best ways to build bone density, experts say. Exercise boosts strength and keeps bones and muscles strong, helping the elderly avoid falling like 91-year-old former First Lady Nancy Reagan, who broke several ribs earlier this year in a tumble at her California home.

"Swimming is a good all-round exercise to safely work the whole body," Dr. Barbara Bushman, author of several books on senior aging and fitness, tells GLOBE. "Strong muscles are like shock absorbers to help keep bones healthy."

Celebrity nutrition and fitness expert J.J. Virgin tells GLOBE seniors should get calcium from leafy green vegetables like spinach instead of milk, which is too acidic.

Adds Dr. Raj, "The bottom line is to stay active and eat healthy."

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Update

Salad fat is where it's at

➤REGULAR salad dressing - NOT the low-calorie stuff - is better for you. The fat it contains boosts the amount of vitamins and nutrients your body will absorb! A study in the Molecular Nutrition & Food Research journal shows light dressings limit the health benefits of plant-based carotenoids, which are antioxidants that slash the risk of chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. To maximize absorption with low-calorie options, experts recommend dressings based on olive and canola oils.

Peppers ease angina pain

➤CHILI peppers are the hottest new treatment for angina, an agonizing heart pain triggered by a lack of blood flow from severely narrowed coronary arteries, say experts. Studies have proven capsaicin, the substance that gives peppers their heat, may help widen blood vessels. Now University of California researchers are testing a new rub-on capsaicin cream, which is easily absorbed through the skin, on volunteers who get "stable" angina, chest pain through exertion.

Don't snooze? You lose!

➤SEVERE sleep deprivation is as hard on your body as physical stress, say scientists. Counting sheep at night triggers the production of white blood cells, which "reacted immediately to the stress of sleep loss and directly mirrored the body's stress response," reveals research leader Dr. Katrin Ackermann of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Further studies are planned to determine exactly how sleep loss contributes to the development of certain diseases.