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### Winter: Building the Bones

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By Dr. Melissa Carr, B.Sc., Dr.TCM • December 14th, 2011 • 7025 Views



Bones can be thought of as bank accounts with a limit. The bone bank account has deposits as bone is built through a process called ossification. That same account also has withdrawals as bone is broken down via bone resorption.

The challenge with this particular bank account is that the limit for deposits is reached approximately by the age of 30. During childhood and adolescence, more bone is deposited than withdrawn, so the skeleton grows. By age 30 bones have reached peak bone mass, the strongest and densest they will be. After that, bones slowly start to weaken, in both men and women. The reason why osteoporosis is of

greater concern for women is that at menopause there can be rapid bone loss for several years. Post-menopause, the loss continues, but not as quickly, and by age 65 or 70 bone loss in women and men is approximately the same.

For those younger than 30, know that this is an important time to invest in bone health. After age 30, it's not too late. No matter how much bone density there is in the account, making sure the withdrawals are limited will lengthen the amount of time that the bone is healthy.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) believes that winter is the time most closely related to the Kidneys\* and Urinary Bladder. It is the Kidneys that rule the bones and joints. When these TCM principles were created thousands of years ago, this likely was not known, but the kidneys are key to regulating the levels of phosphate and calcium, two minerals needed for bone. The kidneys also help activate vitamin D to absorb calcium from food.

**So, to help keep bones strong, it is important to address both the physiological kidneys and the TCM Kidneys, and winter is a great time to refocus on this important system.** Ways that you can do so include the following.

1. Consume foods that support the kidneys and contain high levels of calcium and magnesium: legumes such as kidney beans, **black beans**, adzuki beans, navy beans, lentils, and garbanzo beans
2. Pile up your plate with calcium and magnesium-rich vegetables: artichoke, **kale**, cooked Swiss chard, cooked spinach, sweet potatoes, turnip greens, broccoli, and cooked bok choy
3. Avoid smoking. Smoking increases bone loss and puts the kidneys at a higher risk for diseases, including kidney cancer.
4. Limit alcohol consumption. Excessive drinking can cause damage to both the bones and...

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Tags : health, tcm, traditional chinese medicine, bone density, osteoporosis, vitamin D, bones, kidneys, calcium

Author - Dr. Melissa Carr, B.Sc., Dr.TCM

Location: Vancouver, CA

Dr. Melissa Carr, B.Sc., Dr.TCM has the highest standing with the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Association of British Columbia as a registered Doctor of Traditional

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Chinese Medicine. She began her career in health with a Bachelors...

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