



Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Bone Health

**National Institutes of Health
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Both pregnancy and breastfeeding cause changes in, and place extra demands on, women's bodies. Some of these may affect their bones. The good news is that most women do not experience bone problems during pregnancy and breastfeeding. And if their bones are affected during these times, the problem often is corrected easily. Nevertheless, taking care of one's bone health is especially important during pregnancy and breastfeeding, for the good health of both the mother and her baby.

Pregnancy and Bone Health

During pregnancy, the baby growing in its mother's womb needs plenty of calcium to develop its skeleton. This need is especially great during the last 3 months of pregnancy. If the mother doesn't get enough calcium, her baby will draw what it needs from the mother's bones. So, it is disconcerting that most women of childbearing years are not in the habit of getting enough calcium. Fortunately, pregnancy appears to help protect most women's calcium reserves in several ways:

- Pregnant women absorb calcium from food and supplements better than women who are not pregnant. This is especially true during the last half of pregnancy, when the baby is growing quickly and has the greatest need for calcium.
- During pregnancy, women produce more estrogen, a hormone that protects bones.
- Any bone mass lost during pregnancy is typically restored within several months after the baby's delivery (or several months after breastfeeding is stopped).

Some studies suggest that pregnancy may be good for bone health overall. Some evidence suggests that the more times a woman has been pregnant (for at least 28 weeks), the greater her bone density and the lower her risk of fracture.

In some cases, women develop osteoporosis during pregnancy or breastfeeding, although this is rare. Osteoporosis is bone loss that is serious enough to result in fragile bones and increased risk of fracture.

In many cases, women who develop osteoporosis during pregnancy or breastfeeding will recover lost bone after childbirth or after they stop breastfeeding.

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