



Your Ally Against Osteoporosis

Exercises with the simple, inflatable OsteoBall™ can help maintain and build bone density.

If you've read *Healthy Years* for more than a couple of months, you know how strongly the UCLA geriatrics team emphasizes exercise as a central health goal, for many reasons. One is that it can prevent or counteract a host of illnesses, and a prime example is osteoporosis.

There's a well-established understanding among doctors, researchers, and patients that when you make demands of a muscle, particularly with weight-bearing exercise, the muscle in turn makes demands of the bone to which it's attached. The bone responds by increasing in density and strength, and helps the patient

avoid broken hips, hyperkyphosis (dowager's hump), and other hazards of osteoporosis. Exercising with weights is effective, as are certain movements of yoga, Pilates, and other exercise disciplines. Often, however, it's hard to find time and motivation to get started, especially if it means joining classes or leaving the home.



The OsteoBall is a bit like a beach ball with handles, but is used 2/3 inflated. The 10 basic exercises are shown on the ball.

Robert Swezey, MD, clinical professor of medicine at UCLA and a former director of UCLA's rehabilitation unit, has developed a low-tech, inexpensive exercise system for home use, called the OsteoBall™. Ten exercises that target the major muscle groups of both the upper and lower body are performed with

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- As with any exercise program, check with your doctor before beginning.
- Aerobic exercise is vitally important for your heart, lungs, and circulation, but will not counteract bone density loss as effectively as weight-bearing or isometric exercises like these.
- For more information, call (310) 458-1102, or visit the website: www.bonefitness.com.



the aid of a soft inflatable ball, about the size of a beach ball. In each exercise, strength is applied with gradually increasing force to about 80 percent of capacity, then relaxed, with a slow count of five each way. Dr. Swezey's tests of middle-aged women following the OsteoBall program with exercise sessions of 10 minutes per day have shown good success, including an increase in bone alkaline phosphatase, an indicator of new bone mineral formation.

"As you get stronger, you can apply more muscle power," says Dr. Swezey. "This is the advantage of progressive resistance. You become, in effect, your own trainer."

The standard program uses exercises done standing, sitting, and lying down. There's also a manual for sit-down workouts only. ■

OsteoBall exercises shown below target major muscle groups: 1. abdomen, back, arms, and shoulders (squeeze thighs up, push arms down), 2. quadriceps (push leg out), 3. inner thighs (squeeze in), and 4. upper back (push back with arms only). These are four of the 10 exercises shown on the OsteoBall itself and explained in detail in the manual. Five exercises can be done one day, and five the next.

