

# Three

## Part Three

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### WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS DO TO IMPROVE THEIR BONE HEALTH?

Part Three of the report is the first of three sections that address the question of what can be done to improve the bone health status of Americans. This part of the report approaches the issue from the perspective of the individual, examining those factors that determine bone health and describing lifestyle approaches that individuals can take to improve their personal bone health.

Chapter 6 highlights the critical role that lifestyle factors such as nutrition and physical activity play in overall bone health status. It also provides a thorough review of the evidence on precisely how these factors influence bone health, including those behaviors that promote it (e.g., physical activity, adequate calcium and vitamin D intake) and those that can impair it (e.g., smoking, excessive alcohol consumption). The chapter emphasizes the fact that many Americans do not currently get enough exercise and consume enough calcium and vitamin D to achieve optimal bone health. The chapter also reviews evidence on the impact of other factors on bone health, including the presence of other diseases; the use of certain medications; weight and weight loss; and reproductive issues such as pregnancy, lactation, amenorrhea, oophorectomy, and contraceptive use.

Chapter 7 provides practical, real-world guidance on lifestyle approaches that individuals can take to improve their own bone health, including the following: what foods are the best sources of calcium and vitamin D; how to calculate daily calcium intake; when calcium and/or vitamin D supplementation should be considered; and what types of physical activity can contribute to bone health and overall health. The good-news message of this chapter is that it is surprisingly easy to meet recommended guidelines for nutrition and physical activity, and that following these guidelines not only promotes bone health, but it also enhances overall health and well-being and helps to avoid the onset of other chronic diseases.

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