

# 10 Foods That Build Bones



## 1. Alaskan King Crab

High in protein and low in fat, the sweet flesh of the king crab is spiked with zinc — a whopping 7 milligrams per 3.5-ounce serving. "Zinc is an antioxidant, but more important, it helps support healthy bone mass and immune function," says Susan Bowerman, assistant director of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of California at Los Angeles.

"Several studies have linked adequate zinc intake to increased immunity and decreased incidences of respiratory infection." And you can reap all these benefits by swapping one of your weekly fish meals for a six-ounce serving of crab.

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## 2. Dried Plums

Also known as prunes, these dark shrivelers are rich in copper and boron, both of which can help prevent osteoporosis. "They also contain a fiber called inulin, which, when broken down by intestinal bacteria, makes for a more acidic environment in the digestive tract," says Bowerman. "That, in turn, facilitates calcium absorption." Enjoy four or five a day to strengthen your bones and boost your energy.

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## 3. Bok Choy

This crunchy cruciferous vegetable is more than the filler that goes with shrimp in brown sauce. "Bok choy is rich in bone-building calcium, as well as vitamins A and C, folic acid, iron, beta-carotene, and potassium," says celebrity trainer Teddy Bass. Potassium keeps your muscles and nerves in check while lowering your blood pressure, and research suggests that beta-carotene can reduce the risk of both lung and bladder cancers, as well as macular degeneration. Shoot for a cup a day.

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## 4. Oysters

Shellfish, in general, is an excellent source of zinc, calcium, copper, iodine, iron, potassium, and selenium. "But the creamy flesh of oyster's stands apart for its ability to elevate testosterone levels and protect against prostate cancer," says Bass. "They aren't a food most people will eat regularly, but getting five into your diet twice a week will make your weekends more fun."

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## 5. Bananas

Athletes and performers are familiar with the calming effect of bananas — a result of the fruit's high concentration of tryptophan, a building block of serotonin. But their real benefit comes from potassium, an electrolyte that helps prevent the loss of calcium from the body.

"Bananas also bolster the nervous system, boost immune function, and help the body metabolize protein," says Bass. "One banana packs a day's worth of potassium, and its carbohydrate content speeds recovery after strenuous exercise."

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## 6. Kiwis

Like bananas, this fuzzy fruit is high in bone-protecting potassium. "They're also rich in vitamin C and lutein, a carotenoid that can help reduce the risk of heart disease," says Bowerman. "I try to eat at least one or two a week after exercising." Freeze them for a refreshing energy kick, but don't peel the skin: It's edible and packed with nutrients.

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## 7. Broccoli

Our president's dad may hate this cruciferous all-star, but one cup of broccoli contains a hearty dose of calcium, as well as manganese, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and iron. And that's in addition to its high concentration of vitamins — including A, C, and K — and the phytonutrient sulforaphane, which studies at Johns Hopkins University suggest has powerful anticancer properties.

"One cup a day will do the trick," says Bowerman. Try cauliflower, kale, brussels sprouts, or cabbage for variation, as all possess many of the same nutritional qualities. "Broccoli may also help reduce excess estrogen levels in the body, thanks to its indole 3-carbinol content," says celebrity trainer Gunnar Petersen.

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## 8. Spinach

A renowned muscle builder, spinach is also rich in vitamin K, which has been shown to bolster bone-mineral density (thus protecting against osteoporosis) and reduce fracture rates. Spinach is also high in calcium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, and even selenium, which may help protect the liver and ward off Alzheimer's.

One more reason to add it to your diet: A study in the *Journal of Nutrition* suggests that the carotenoid neoxanthin in spinach can kill prostate cancer cells, while the beta-carotene fights colon cancer. "Popeye was on to something," says Bowerman. "Eat one cup of cooked spinach, or two cups raw, four times a week."



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## 9. Leeks

These scallion-like cousins of garlic and onions are packed with bone-bolstering thiamine, riboflavin, calcium, and potassium. Leeks are also rich in folic acid, a B vitamin that studies have shown to lower levels of the artery-damaging amino acid homocystein in the blood.

What's more, "Leeks can support sexual functioning and reduce the risk of prostate cancer," says Michael Dansinger, MD, an assistant professor of medicine and an obesity researcher at Tufts-New England Medical Center, in Boston. "Chop the green part of a medium leek into thin ribbons and add it to soups, sautés, and salads as often as possible."

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## 10. Artichokes

Lauded for centuries as an aphrodisiac, this fiber-rich plant contains more bone-building magnesium and potassium than any other vegetable. Its leaves are also rich in flavonoids and polyphenols — antioxidants that can cut the risk of stroke — and vitamin C, which helps maintain the immune system. "Eat them as often as you can," says Bower man. Ripe ones feel heavy for their size and squeak when squeezed.