

[IMAGE]

Workout, Baby, Workout!

Growing evidence suggests that simple exercises can help babies grow and stay healthy - even when administered in the first few weeks of life. Consider a recent study involving 24 infants; if the results are any indication, preventing bone-thinning ailments, such as osteopenia, may be as simple as providing flexion, extension and nurturing.

A team of Israeli researchers matched low-birth-weight infants of similar development (4-7 days after birth) and divided them into an exercise group and a control group of 12 infants apiece. Growth rate and characteristics of bones, such as strength, were measured at enrollment (during the first week of life) and at four weeks.

Infants in the exercise group received regular five-minute sessions of flexion and extension at various joints, five times a week for four weeks; infants in the control group received similar-length periods of holding and stroking, but without range-of-motion activity. Although physical activity did not appear to influence bone formation, bone density remained stable in the exercise group while decreasing significantly in the control group. W

hile this a very small sampling, and infants are not the easiest subjects to physically evaluate, results point to what many health care providers have been saying all along: Exercise - at whatever age and whatever amount - can positively impact a number of health conditions, including bone density. It's also important to note that flexion and extension are common techniques utilized by chiropractors in the clinical setting.

Reference:

Litmanovitz I, Dolfin T, Friedland O, et al. Early physical activity intervention prevents decrease of bone strength in very low birth weight infants. *Pediatrics* July 2003: Volume 112, Number 1, pp.15-19.

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