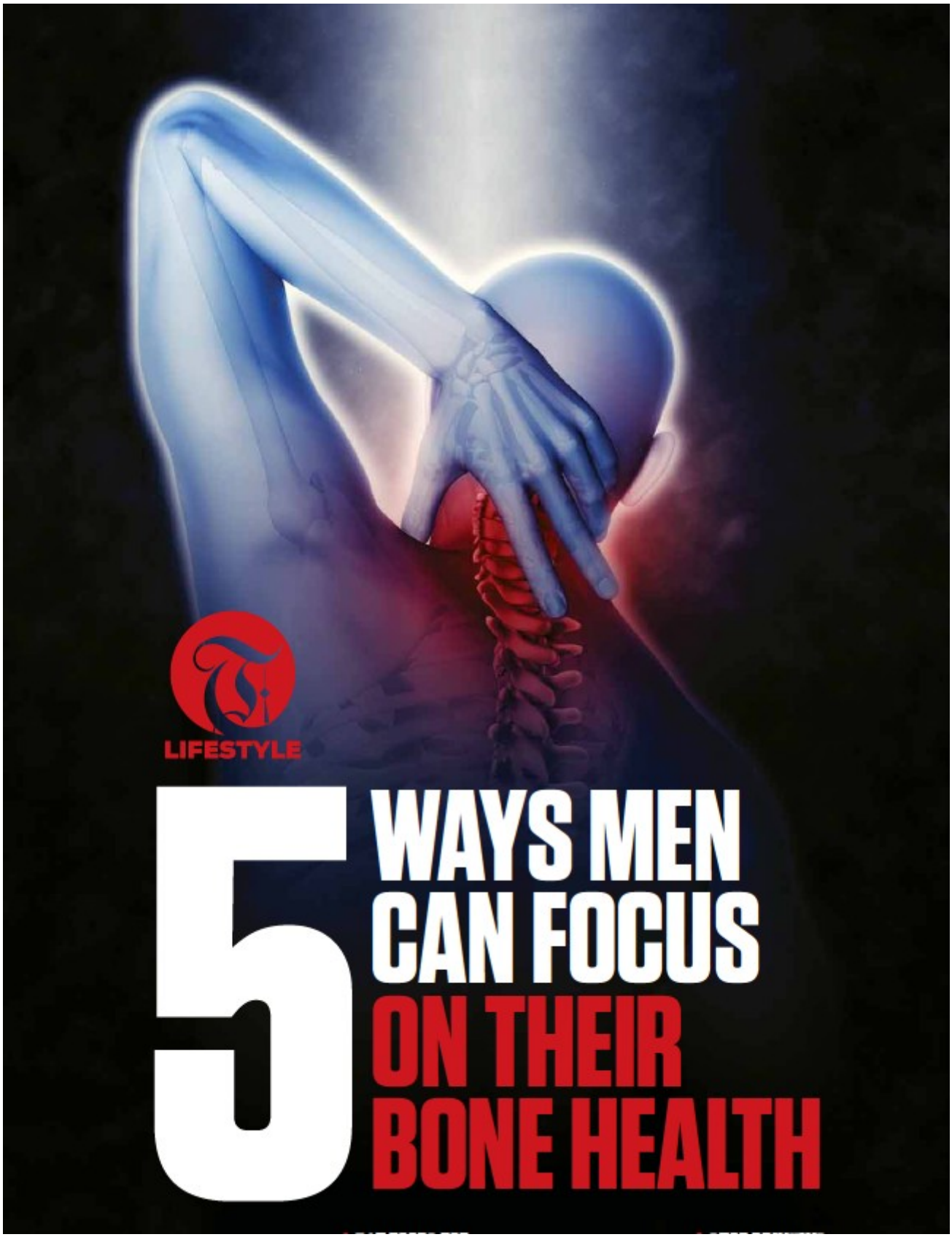
5 WAYS MEN CAN FOCUS ON THEIR BONE HEALTH

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hen you hear about osteoporosis, what kind of patient do you picture? Chances are, you imagine a woman. However, you may be surprised to learn that while it's commonly known as a women's disease, men are also at risk of developing osteoporosis and experiencing serious injuries related to this condition.

According to the Bone Health & Osteoporosis Foundation (BHOF) based in the US, osteoporosis in men is a serious risk.

While many men may be concerned about developing prostate cancer, they're actually more likely to break a bone because of osteoporosis. In fact, one in four men over 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis.

Breaking a bone isn't just painful. It can have serious health consequences. Each year, about 80,000 men will break a hip and compared to women, they're more likely to die within a year of breaking a hip.

Whether you are a man or a woman, you can help maintain and improve your bone health through lifestyle choices and early intervention. Here are five tips that both men and women can do to invest in their bone health to help prevent the risk of weak bones.

1. EAT FOODS FOR BONE HEALTH

Eating the right foods is one of the easiest ways to strengthen bones. According to BHOF, calcium is especially important, as it's the building block of your bones. Make sure you eat and drink your calcium daily by incorporating low-fat dairy, leafy greens, fish, fortified juices, milk and grains into your diet.

Of course, getting enough calcium isn't useful on its own. You should talk to your doctor to ensure you're getting enough vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium. While some foods contain vitamin D, taking a supplement can help raise your levels. Similarly, your doctor may recommend you start on a calcium supplement.

Finally, you'll need protein to build and repair bones. According to Harvard Health, healthy protein sources include dairy products, fish, legumes, poultry, whole grains, nuts, seeds, corn, broccoli and asparagus.

2. MAKE EXERCISE A PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

Just like your muscles, your bones become stronger with exercise. Weight-bearing exercises, like hiking, jogging, tennis, dancing and climbing stairs, are excellent for strengthening bones.

Muscle-strengthening exercises are also important because your muscles and bones work in tandem. As your muscles grow stronger from exercise, they pull on your bones, encouraging them to get stronger to support the strain on your muscles. According to BHOF, lifting weights, resistance exercises with elastic bands, yoga and Pilates are great for improving strength, balance and flexibility, which can help prevent falls as you age.

3. SKIP THE CIGARETTE

Smoking is detrimental to your overall health and specifically increases your risk of weakened bones. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the US, studies

suggest tobacco use has been linked to decreased bone density and increased fracture risks.

Smoking also increases common risk factors that contribute to osteoporosis. For example, the NIH notes that smokers tend to be thinner, drink more, are less physically active and have poor diets compared to nonsmokers. All of these factors increase your risk of developing osteoporosis.

4. STOP DRINKING

Drinking alcohol is associated with many health problems, including osteoporosis. Excessive drinking throws off calcium balance and the production of vitamin D.

Alcohol can also affect your balance and gait, which is why people with alcoholism tend to fall more frequently.

Heavy drinking has been linked to an increased risk of fractures, especially hip fractures.

To maintain healthy bones and prevent falling, BHOF recommends limiting your alcohol consumption to 2-3 drinks per day.

5. TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

In addition to making healthy life choices, you should talk with your doctor about a bone density scan.

This is especially important for men: unlike women, who are recommended to get a bone density scan after age 65, the NIH notes that men are often not diagnosed until a fracture occurs or the man complains of back pain.

Additionally, if you have osteoporosis and are at risk of a fracture, your doctor may also recommend medication.