

# Bad knees aren't just a 'guy thing'

By Janet Whirlow, MD | Scottsdale Healthcare



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The desire to enjoy regular rounds of golf, hiking, bicycling and other activities has led many a man to an orthopedic specialist for aching or injured bones and joints.

But increasingly, those men aren't alone. More women are seeking expert help for orthopedic problems because they want to be more active.

Many female orthopedic issues reflect the differences between men and women. Generally, men have had more exposure to strengthening and also have more muscle bulk to protect their joints. Women have wider hips, which translates into stress on their knees, and experience hormonal fluctuations resulting in laxness in ligaments that support joints.

Unfortunately, all this can mean painful hips, knees, ankles, mid feet and even big toes for women. Here are some tips for avoiding these problems.

### **Eat a balanced, healthy diet.**

Nutrition is the basis of bone and tissue health. Eat plenty of vegetables and avoid sugary and processed foods.

### **Exercise regularly.**

But keep in mind that if you haven't exercised much then suddenly get active, you can bring up orthopedic injuries. This includes knee pain, the most common orthopedic complaint in middle-aged women. It's good advice to see a qualified trainer, physical therapist or orthopedic expert to help you create an individually appropriate exercise program.

### **Adopt a healthy lifestyle.**

Women lay down their peak bone mass in their 20s and 30s. While you can't add to this afterward, factors such as smoking, eating disorders and alcohol use can subtract from it and pave the way for osteoporosis. Maintaining an ideal weight also is important in keeping your joints strong.

### **Wear appropriate shoes.**

Forget about what's hot on the fashion runways. High heels and narrow toes can strain your lower back, hips, knees and feet, plus affect balance.

### **Take charge of your health.**

Women often put off getting help for bone or joint problems because they're busy tending to others' needs. Be sure you take good care of yourself.