

# Prunes may strengthen bones

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Could aid women after menopause

By Anita Weier  
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Could prunes reverse bone loss after menopause?

A professor at Florida State University thinks so, and is starting a test aimed at proving

what preliminary findings show.

Professor Bahram Arjmandi previously conducted studies that indicated that prunes restored lost bone in rats. A following study found that blood profiles indicative of bone health increased in postmenopausal women who ate prunes.

"Prune-eating slowed bone breakdown and helped bone

formation," he said in a phone interview Friday. "That is not done by most other foods."

Arjmandi — who prefers to call prunes dried plums — said it is vital to expand the range of effective treatment options for osteoporosis, because 10 million Americans have the debilitating disease and another 34 million are at risk.

Postmenopausal women are particularly susceptible to fractures due to osteoporotic bone loss, and up to 20 percent of that loss can occur within just five to seven years after menopause, he said.

The one-year clinical study at FSU will involve 144 Florida women. Half of the women will supplement their daily diets with nine or 10 prunes. The other half will consume a comparable portion of dried apples, which also have known health benefits. Participants also will take daily supplements of calcium and Vitamin D. No one will be getting a placebo, and everyone will benefit in some manner, he said.

"If the findings are positive, they could help researchers isolate the compounds responsible," he said. "It may be possible to create a safe, low-cost alternative or adjunct to prescription medications for osteoporosis."

If the study succeeds in increasing bone density, he would conduct a larger and longer study focusing on fracture outcomes, Arjmandi added.

Prunes and prune juice have a number of health benefits, with the best known being reduction of constipation.