

Low-level, high-frequency mechanical signals enhance musculoskeletal development of young women with low BMD.

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Abstract

The potential for brief periods of low-magnitude, high-frequency mechanical signals to enhance the musculoskeletal system was evaluated in young women with low BMD. Twelve months of this noninvasive signal, induced as whole body vibration for at least 2 minutes each day, increased bone and muscle mass in the axial skeleton and lower extremities compared with controls.

INTRODUCTION: The incidence of osteoporosis, a disease that manifests in the elderly, may be reduced by increasing peak bone mass in the young. Preliminary data indicate that extremely low-level mechanical signals are anabolic to bone tissue, and their ability to enhance bone and muscle mass in young women was investigated in this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: A 12-month trial was conducted in 48 young women (15-20 years) with low BMD and a history of at least one skeletal fracture. One half of the subjects underwent brief (10 minutes requested), daily, low-level whole body vibration (30 Hz, 0.3g); the remaining women served as controls. Quantitative CT performed at baseline and at the end of study was used to establish changes in muscle and bone mass in the weight-bearing skeleton.

RESULTS: Using an intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis, cancellous bone in the lumbar vertebrae and cortical bone in the femoral midshaft of the experimental group increased by 2.1% ($p = 0.025$) and 3.4% ($p < 0.001$), respectively, compared with 0.1% ($p = 0.74$) and 1.1% ($p = 0.14$), in controls. Increases in cancellous and cortical bone were 2.0% ($p = 0.06$) and 2.3% ($p = 0.04$) greater, respectively, in the experimental group compared with controls. Cross-sectional area of paraspinous musculature was 4.9% greater ($p = 0.002$) in the experimental group versus controls. When a per protocol analysis was considered, gains in both muscle and bone were strongly correlated to a threshold in compliance, where the benefit of the mechanical intervention compared with controls was realized once subjects used the device for at least 2 minute/day ($n = 18$), as reflected by a 3.9% increase in cancellous bone of the spine ($p = 0.007$), 2.9% increase in cortical bone of the femur ($p = 0.009$), and 7.2% increase in musculature of the spine ($p = 0.001$) compared with controls and low compliers ($n = 30$).

CONCLUSIONS: Short bouts of extremely low-level mechanical signals, several orders of magnitude below that associated with vigorous exercise, increased bone and muscle mass in the weight-bearing skeleton of young adult females with low BMD. Should these musculoskeletal enhancements be preserved through adulthood, this intervention may prove to be a deterrent to osteoporosis in the elderly.

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