



**LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE FACTORS  
WHICH AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
BONE MINERAL CONTENT, BONE WIDTH  
AND BONE MINERAL DENSITY  
THROUGH ADOLESCENCE**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title .....	i
Table of contents .....	ii
Summary .....	vi
Declaration .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
Abbreviations .....	xi
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Bone growth .....	4
2.1.1 Composition of bone.....	4
2.1.2 Bone growth .....	4
2.1.3 Peak bone mass (PBM).....	6
2.2 PBM in the etiology of osteoporosis .....	15
2.3 PBM and genetic and environmental factors .....	19
2.3.1 Genetic factors .....	19
2.3.2 Nutrient intake .....	24
2.3.2.1 Calcium metabolism .....	24
2.3.2.2 Problems in dietary methodology .....	29
2.3.2.3 Calcium intake and bone status: overview .....	33
2.3.2.4 Studies in children and adolescents .....	34
2.3.2.5 Studies in young adults and premenopausal women .....	38
2.3.2.6 Other dietary factors .....	41
2.3.3 Physical activity .....	42
2.3.3.1 Physical activity and bone .....	42
2.3.3.2 Problems in physical activity methodology .....	44
2.3.3.3 Physical activity and bone status: overview .....	45
2.3.3.4 Studies in children and adolescents .....	46
2.3.3.5 Studies in young adults .....	47
2.3.4 Summary .....	49
2.4 Measurement of bone status .....	50
2.5 Assessment of bone status in children and adolescents .....	53
2.6 Bone status, growth and maturation .....	60
2.6.1 Age and gender .....	61

2.6.2	Pubertal status .....	65
2.6.3	Measures of body size .....	67
2.6.4	Skeletal maturity .....	69
2.6.5	Environmental and genetic influences .....	69
2.7	Conclusions .....	70
2.8	Aims and hypotheses .....	72
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>73</b>
3.1	Subjects and methods .....	73
3.1.1	The subjects .....	73
3.1.2	Bone measurements .....	74
3.1.3	Anthropometric measurements .....	77
3.1.4	Bone age .....	78
3.1.5	Pubertal status and sex hormones .....	78
3.1.6	Dietary intake .....	78
3.1.7	Physical activity .....	80
3.1.8	Data analysis .....	82
3.1.9	Power calculations .....	83
3.1.10	Ethics approval .....	84
3.1.11	Consent .....	84
3.2	Discussion of methodology .....	86
3.2.1	Bone measurements .....	86
3.2.2	Dietary intake .....	86
3.2.3	Physical activity .....	89
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Results: Bone status and biological variables .....</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1	Age and gender .....	92
4.1.1	Absolute bone status .....	92
4.1.2	Tracking .....	96
4.1.3	Rate of change in bone status .....	99
4.1.4	Relation to adult values .....	105
4.2	Pubertal status, age at menarche, sex hormones .....	107
4.2.1	Absolute bone status .....	107
4.2.1.1	Pubertal status .....	107
4.2.1.2	Age at menarche .....	115
4.2.1.3	Sex hormones .....	119

4.2.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	122
4.2.2.1	Pubertal status .....	122
4.2.2.2	Age at menarche .....	123
4.2.2.3	Sex hormones .....	125
4.3	Anthropometric variables .....	126
4.3.1	Absolute bone status .....	126
4.3.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	129
4.4	Bone age .....	132
4.4.1	Absolute bone status .....	132
4.4.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	134
Discussion	.....	135
4.1	Age and gender .....	135
4.1.1	Absolute bone status .....	135
4.1.2	Tracking .....	138
4.1.3	Rate of change in bone status .....	138
4.1.4	Peak bone status.....	140
4.2	Pubertal status, age at menarche, sex hormones .....	142
4.2.1	Absolute bone status .....	142
4.2.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	145
4.3	Anthropometric measurements .....	146
4.3.1	Absolute bone status .....	146
4.3.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	147
4.4	Bone age .....	148
4.4.1	Absolute bone status .....	148
4.4.2	Rate of change in bone status .....	149
4.5	Summary .....	149
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Results: Bone status and environmental factors .....</b>	<b>151</b>
5.1	Nutrient intake .....	151
5.1.1	Intake of energy and nutrients .....	151
5.1.2	Tracking of nutrients .....	156
5.1.3	Calcium intake over time .....	158
5.1.4	Nutrient intake and bone status .....	159
5.1.5	Nutrient intake and rate of change in bone status .....	164
5.2	Physical activity .....	168
5.2.1	Physical activity score .....	168
5.2.2	Physical activity and bone status .....	170

5.2.3 Physical activity and rate of change in bone status .....	173
Discussion .....	174
5.1 Nutrient intake .....	174
5.2 Physical activity .....	177
<b>Chapter 6 Results: Bone status and genetic factors .....</b>	<b>179</b>
6.1 Intrafamilial correlations of bone variables .....	179
6.2 Estimates of heritability .....	183
6.3 Child values as a percentage of parental values .....	184
Discussion .....	185
6.1 Intrafamilial correlations .....	185
6.2 Estimates of heritability .....	187
6.3 Child values as percent of parental values .....	188
<b>Chapter 7 Results: Relationship of all factors to bone status.....</b>	<b>189</b>
7.1 Absolute bone status .....	189
7.2 Rate of change in bone status .....	198
Discussion .....	208
7.1 Absolute bone status .....	208
7.2 Rate of change in bone status .....	210
<b>Chapter 8 Final discussion .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>221</b>

## SUMMARY

This thesis presents prospective data on forearm bone status in a group of Australian children. Bone mineral content (BMC), width (BW), areal density (aBMD) and volumetric density (vBMD) were determined at ages 11, 13, 15 and 17 years in 56 boys and 52 girls. Absolute values of all bone variables increased with age and sexual maturity. Velocities were dependent on age and sexual maturity. Maximal increases in all bone variables occurred earlier in girls than in boys due to girls' earlier sexual maturity, and earlier in BW than in the other bone variables. vBMD velocity was negative in boys from 11 to 13 years. At 17 years BMC, BW and aBMD were significantly greater in boys than girls but there was no difference in vBMD.

Between 11 and 17 years BMC and vBMD as percentages of the young same sex adult means increased from 45 and 71% respectively to 86% for both in boys, and from 55 and 71% to 93 and 94% respectively in girls. Values at 17 years and bone velocities from 15 to 17 years suggested that girls were near peak bone status by age 17 but significant gains were still occurring in boys. Comparison of bone status according to bone age indicated that at cessation of longitudinal growth girls were very near peak bone status (97%) but increases were likely to continue in boys.

Neither nutrient intake nor physical activity was detectably correlated with bone status or bone status velocity. However BMC, aBMD and vBMD velocities from 11 to 17 years were significantly greater in those girls with consistently high calcium intakes ( $>RDI$ ) than those with consistently low intakes ( $<0.7RDI$ ). The high degree of tracking in all bone variables suggested that there was limited opportunity for environmental factors to alter bone status.

Multiple regression analysis determined the ability of biological factors, environmental factors and genetic factors, to predict each bone variable and the change in each variable. 80%, 71% and 49% of the variance of BMC, BW, and BMD respectively was accounted for by a combination of up to eight variables. 52% of the variance in change in BMC, 55% for BW,

and 58% for BMD was accounted for by a combination of up to five factors. Neither calcium intake nor physical activity were significant variables in any equation.

The stronger correlation of bone variables between both sons and daughters and their mothers, compared with their fathers and the lower bone status velocity in girls with consistently low calcium intakes, identifies a target population (girls with poor calcium intake and daughters of osteoporotic mothers and grandmothers) for further investigation. Meanwhile the public health messages of the benefits of good nutrition and regular physical activity should be targetted at children before and during their period of rapid growth so that their genetic potential of peak bone status can be achieved.