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Let the Children Play

Giving children every opportunity for play was critical to their bone health in later life, Dr Rob Reid, President of Sports Medicine Australia ACT Branch said.

Speaking at the launch of "Healthy Bones Week" (7-13 August) at Gold Creek Primary School, Dr Reid said that many research studies had shown the same results in regard to the development of the human skeleton.

"Adolescence is the critical time for bone development", Dr Reid said. Researchers have presented evidence at Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) conferences showing that as much bone mineral is laid down during the two years spanning the adolescent growth spurt as will be lost during the adult years from 50 to 80.

"In fact, senile osteoporosis has been called a disease of childhood. Failure to lay down healthy bone in childhood can really come back to haunt you in later life.

"Diet is also important. Ensuring sufficient calcium is the other part of the healthy bone equation.

"However, the critical factor for Australian society today is physical activity," Dr Reid said. "This is especially the case where more children than ever are simply not meeting minimum guideline levels of one hour of activity a day.

"The best activity for bone development has been shown to be what is termed 'weight-bearing exercise'.

"This is not rocket science," Dr Reid said. "A good example is skipping. We must give our children every opportunity for involvement in self-generated, free-time spontaneous play involving weight-bearing physical activity.

Dr Reid congratulated Osteoporosis Australia for organising Healthy Bones Week and their work in building awareness in the community about the importance of bone health.

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media release