



October 6, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Baby Bones

If you read the message regularly, you know I frequently mention my pretend grandson Riley. He's 18 months old and he has one speed: fast. As a result, he occasionally falls. While sometimes he does fall hard enough to hurt himself, he doesn't break any bones as I might if I fell that often. Why not?

Most of a baby's bones begin as cartilage. A baby has about 300 bones at birth. As they grow, their bones begin to get solid; the cartilage cells gradually become bone cells by absorbing minerals such as calcium. Some bones fuse together such as the bones of the skull and pelvic girdle. That's how they end up with 206 as adults. Other bones will continue to grow up through 20 to 25 years of age.

Here is one thing that just fascinates me: babies don't have knee caps. I regularly check Riley to see if he has them, but it's not going to happen until he's about three. Instead babies have cartilage that will eventually harden into bone. If you think about how much time babies spend on their knees, it makes sense for them to have something more flexible than bone.

One more important fact, especially for girls. By about 18, they will have about 90% of the bone mineral they will ever have and by 25, they're done building; if they haven't done a good enough job, they're more at risk for osteoporosis as they age. It's critical that girls and boys get enough calcium in their teens to maximize bone growth. Then when they hit about 30, they really need to stay active so that their bones keep their mineral content.

What are you prepared to do today?

*Dr. Chet*



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