



Osteoporosis and broken bones



Could you break a bone and not know it?

If you have **osteoporosis** (os-tee-oh-puh-roh-sis), certain bones, like the ones in your spine, can break without causing you any pain. If you do have pain, you may think you've only pulled a muscle. Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thinner and weaker than normal. This can make them more likely to break. **Broken bones (also called fractures) can be the first sign of osteoporosis.**

If you are over 50 and break a bone, talk to your healthcare provider about getting screened and tested for osteoporosis.

Fractures can make everyday tasks and activities harder. This may mean you get less enjoyment from life. But you can do things that can help lower your chances of fractures.



Height loss can be a sign of osteoporosis and spine fractures

Height loss can also be a sign of a spine fracture. Talk to your healthcare provider if you:

- Are losing more than 3/4 inch a year
- Have lost 1-1/2 inches of height since age 20
- Notice your back is curving forward

Common fractures

Fractures can happen in many different bones. There are some fractures that occur more often in people with osteoporosis.

Fractures happen often in three areas: the spine, the wrist, and the hip.



Spine

Fractures of the spine may cause height loss. They can hurt, but some people don't have any pain at all. Others may think they've only pulled a muscle. For many, these fractures are the first signs of osteoporosis.



Wrist

Bones in the hand and arm meet at the wrist. Any of these bones can break. Some wrist fractures require surgery. Recovery may take months.



Hip

Falls can result in hip fractures. Hip fractures often require surgery and hospital stays. More than half of people who have a hip fracture never fully recover.



You can break a bone in a minor incident, like a minor fall or stepping the wrong way off of a curb. These kinds of incidents might seem like bad luck, but bones weakened by osteoporosis may be part of the cause.

Avoiding fractures

There are a few ways to help lower your chances of breaking a bone if you have osteoporosis.

Be active

Weight-bearing activities help strengthen your bones. This doesn't mean lifting weights. With weight-bearing activities, your feet and legs hold up your body's weight. These are activities such as walking, jogging, dancing, and climbing stairs.

Muscle-building workouts help with balance and flexibility. Activities such as swimming, yoga, and lifting weights can build muscles that keep you from falling.



Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about what exercises may be best for you, especially if you have osteoporosis.



Prevent falls

Staying active isn't the only way to help avoid fractures. You can also make simple changes in your daily life to help prevent falls.

- Keep the floors free from clutter.
- Make sure stairs are well lit and have rails on both sides
- Watch for slippery floors and sidewalks.
- Wear shoes with good support and nonslip soles.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about whether any of your medicines could affect your balance.

Stay healthy

Getting enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet is important for keeping your bones strong. **Foods such as milk, soybeans, broccoli, and salmon have these vitamins and minerals.** Your healthcare provider may advise you to take supplements if you are not getting the nutrients you need from food. Talk with your healthcare provider about alcohol and tobacco, if you use them. These can prevent your body from using important nutrients, such as calcium.





When to talk to your healthcare provider about osteoporosis

You can talk with your healthcare provider about osteoporosis at any age. Don't wait to learn more if any of the statements below apply to you.

☐ **You're losing height.**

A loss in height may be a sign that you have one or more spine fractures.

☐ **You have a fracture at age 50 or older.**

After age 50, a fracture can be a sign of osteoporosis.

☐ **You have been taking glucocorticoid medicines for several months.**

Taking glucocorticoids can result in weaker bones.

☐ **You have a family history of osteoporosis.**

Osteoporosis can run in families. You are at higher risk for osteoporosis if a family member has it.

☐ **You're not getting enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet.**

If you don't get enough calcium or vitamin D, you may lose bone.

Notes



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