

Call to Action

Have you ever broken a bone after a minor fall or bump and do you know if you are at risk of further broken bones?

It is important that you take action to ensure that you reduce your risk of future breaks and get the care you are entitled to.

Why is this important?

If you break a bone (such as upper arm, wrist, pelvis, spine, hip, upper or lower leg) following a minor bump or fall from standing height when you are over the age of 50 years, this is called a 'fragility fracture'. Fragility fractures can be a sign of osteoporosis, a bone disease that affects over two million people in the UK¹ and put you at greater risk of breaking another bone.

Osteoporosis is much more common in women, particularly after the menopause.¹ It causes bones to become fragile and more prone to breaking. In most cases, osteoporosis doesn't cause any signs or symptoms and so most people don't realise they have the disease until they suffer a fracture. Fractures of the limbs may be obvious following a fall, but fractures of the vertebrae may go unrecognised.

Every year in the UK 300,000 people suffer a fragility fracture – the wrist, hip, shoulder and spine are the parts of the body most commonly affected.² These fractures can cause a great deal of pain and disability and can make it difficult to live independently.

What can be done?

The good news is that osteoporosis can be easily diagnosed and treated – in fact, with the right treatment and care, **half of all fragility fractures could be prevented.**³⁻⁵

Your GP can use a short online questionnaire called FRAX™ to assess your risk and, if needed, can arrange to measure your bone density. If you are at risk of fracture, treatment can be prescribed to help protect you against future fractures. Your GP can also advise on simple lifestyle changes that can help to improve your bone health.

What can you do?

- Make an appointment to see your GP if you think you might be at risk of osteoporosis or have had a fracture and are not receiving any treatment
- Encourage your friends or family over the age of 50 years who may be at risk of osteoporosis or fracture to have a risk assessment
- If you have stopped taking your treatment for any reason make an appointment to see your GP to ensure you continue to protect yourself from future fracture

If you would like further information about osteoporosis or how to improve your bone health, visit the National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) website at www.nos.org.uk.

References

1. NICE technology appraisal guidance 161
2. BOA-BGS 2007 Blue Book
3. Delmas PD. Treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis. *Lancet* 2002; 359: 2018–2026
4. Bouxsein ML, Kaufman J, Tosi L *et al.* Recommendations for optimal care of the fragility fracture patient to reduce the risk of future fractures. *J Am Acad Orthop Surg* 2004; in press.
5. Woolf AD, Akesson K. Preventing fractures in elderly people. *BMJ* 2003; 327: 89–95

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