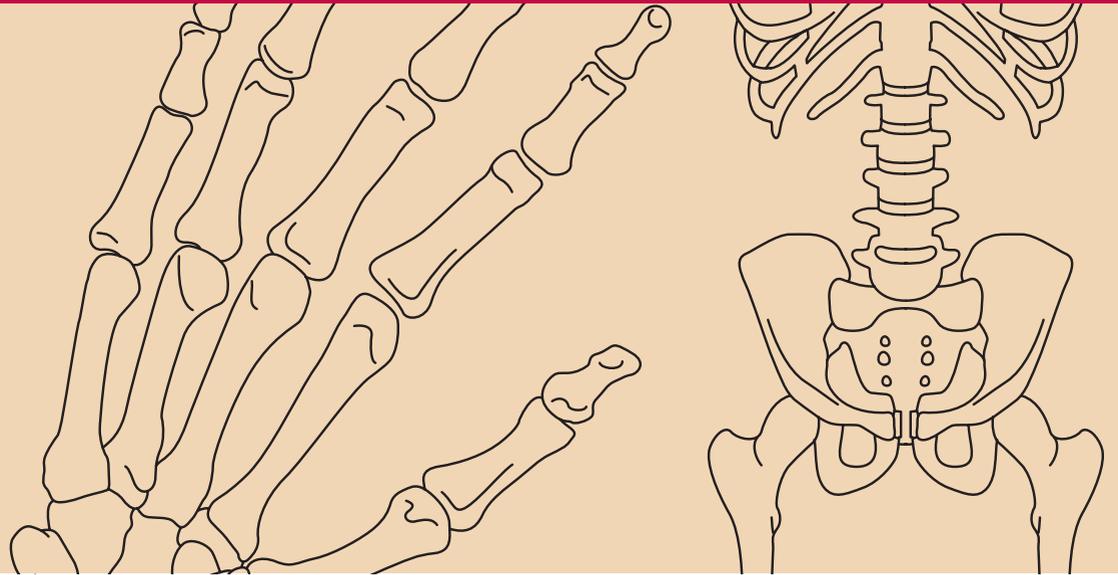


# Healthy Bones



## Caring for your bones

**Advice for older people**

Endorsed by



**National  
Osteoporosis  
Society**

## Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people

### Financial leaflets

- Can You Claim It?
- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

### Housing and home safety leaflets

- Care Homes
- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Matters
- Keep Out the Cold
- Your Safety
- Your Security

### Health leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Fight the Flu
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Keeping Mobile
- Managing Your Medicines
- Shingles
- Staying Steady

Leaflets are free of charge and available from the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page, email [advicelaflets@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:advicelaflets@helptheaged.org.uk) or fax 0870 770 3282.

This leaflet is endorsed by the National Osteoporosis Society.

If you would like this leaflet in another format, such as large print or audio tape, please contact the Information Resources Team on **020 7278 1114**.

## Contents

Bone health	page 4
Avoiding broken bones	page 4
Avoiding falls	page 6
Enjoy a well-balanced diet	page 7
Have a healthy lifestyle	page 8
Talk to your doctor	page 9
Useful contacts	page 10

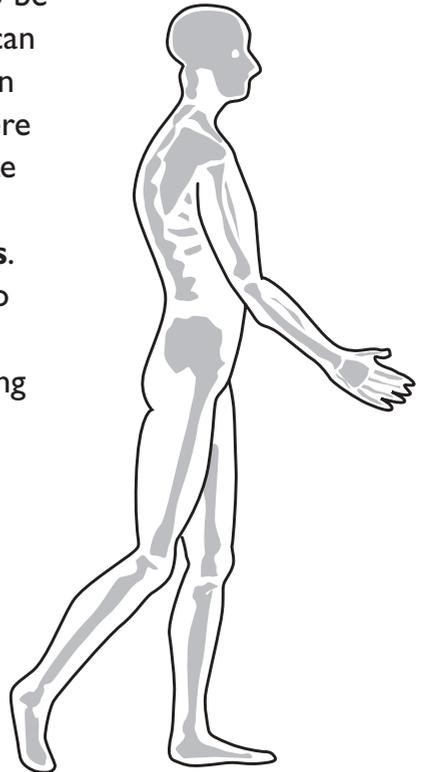
**It is very important to keep our bones healthy throughout our lives. The skeleton isn't a dead coat hanger – it's a living tissue which needs to be nourished and exercised to keep it strong. Like other parts of the body it has to be protected from disease. This leaflet provides advice on how to keep bones strong and healthy as we get older.**

## **Bone health**

Bones are alive and constantly changing, with new bone being made and old bone lost throughout our lives. In adults, the entire skeleton is completely replaced every seven to ten years. Bones continue to grow in strength until the age of about 35 when old bone starts to be lost at a faster rate than new bone can be formed to replace it. In some men and women this bone loss is so severe that their bones become weak, fragile and liable to break very easily. This condition is known as **osteoporosis**. Fortunately, we can take measures to reduce the risk of developing this disease, enabling us to maintain strong bones through to old age.

## **Avoiding broken bones**

One in two women and one in five men over 50 will suffer a broken bone, mainly as a result of osteoporosis. The most common bones to break are

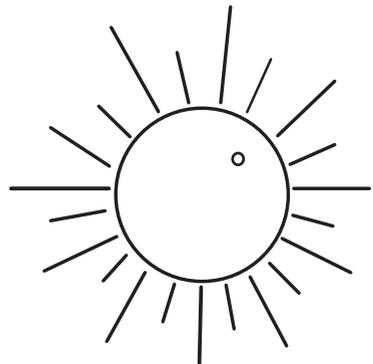


bones in the hip, spine or wrist. Women are particularly at risk because during and after the menopause they experience rapid bone loss when the ovaries stop producing the female hormone oestrogen.

Coping with a broken bone is not only very painful but also makes independent living difficult and may cause long-term problems with mobility. With approximately 3 million people living with osteoporosis in the UK alone, it is now a serious health problem.

But whatever your age, there are some simple measures you can take to prevent yourself from suffering broken bones.

- Avoid falls.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with enough calcium and vitamin D.
- Take regular weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking, aerobics, skipping and dancing.
- Avoid smoking or excessive alcohol intake.
- Seek advice from your family doctor.
- Make sure you get enough vitamin D from the sun by taking short breaks outside during the spring and summer months.



## Avoiding falls

As you get older, you are more likely to have a fall, but there are things you can do to prevent falling. It is important to take a look at your home to make it as safe as possible. Some simple, practical steps you could take include the following:

- Keep an eye out for anything that could cause you to trip or slip. Remember to keep the floor clear of trailing flexes and rucked-up or fraying carpets that you might trip over or slip on. Make sure your stairs and floors are free of clutter.
- Be particularly careful when grandchildren are visiting. They may leave toys where you don't expect them, which could easily trip you up.
- If you have a pet, be careful they don't get under your feet. Keep pet food dishes in a corner, where you can't trip over them.
- Try to store objects you use every day at a reasonable height to avoid reaching or bending. You could also try using 'reaching aids', such as handle extensions and a pick-up tool. The Disabled Living Foundation (address on page 10) can give advice on gadgets which make everyday activities easier.
- Make sure that stairways are well lit and think about installing a hand rail for extra safety. Regular eye tests will reassure you that your sight is as good as it can be. See our free advice leaflet *Better Sight* for more information.
- A rubber mat in the bath and a 'grab rail' make it much easier to get out of the bath without slipping.
- You may need to take extra care outside in winter when slippery and uneven pavements and kerb stones may cause you to trip and fall.

- Wear well-fitting shoes with a strap or laces. Try to avoid shoes with high heels, or mules.

Our free advice leaflet, *Your Safety* makes more suggestions on preventing accidents in the home. For more information on improving strength and balance, and reducing the risk of falling, see our free advice leaflet *Staying Steady*.

## Enjoy a well-balanced diet

A healthy, balanced diet is needed to supply the body with energy, essential nutrients and fibre. An adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D is important to maintain bone health, particularly as you grow older. Try to include the following foods in your daily diet:

### Foods containing calcium

milk, cheese, yoghurt and other dairy products  
tinned sardines and pilchards – including the soft bones!  
beans such as baked beans, kidney beans and lentils  
okra, spinach, kale and broccoli  
nuts and tahini  
tofu  
dried fruit such as figs, prunes, raisins and dates

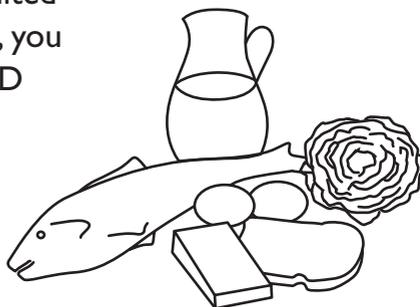
### Foods containing vitamin D

oily fish such as mackerel, herring or salmon  
margarine  
breakfast cereals  
egg yolks

For more information on diet, write to the **National Osteoporosis Society** and ask for their *Healthy Eating for Stronger Bones* booklet priced £3.00. The charity also produces a recipe book called *Great Healthy Food for Strong Bones*, priced £13 (see page 10 for their contact details).

As you get older, your body is less efficient at absorbing calcium. Experts recommend that older people have an intake of 700mg of calcium and between 400 and 800 international units of vitamin D a day. A third of a pint of milk contains 225mg of calcium and a 5oz pot of yoghurt has 240mg.

Vitamin D is needed for calcium to be properly absorbed. Even in the UK climate, most people gain sufficient vitamin D by being outside for part of the day in summer (sunshine is a natural source of vitamin D), or from their diet. However, if you have a limited diet or are not able to get out, you may need calcium and vitamin D supplements. Ask your doctor or practice nurse if you are not sure whether you are getting enough of these essential nutrients.



## Have a healthy lifestyle

- Try to take regular exercise. Exercise keeps bones strong so try to take a little exercise every day. Even simple exercise such as walking to the shops will help keep your bones healthy. It also improves your balance and co-ordination which helps to prevent falls. Our free advice leaflet *Keeping Mobile* suggests how you can keep active, even if you have restricted mobility at present.

- Keep the amount you drink within sensible limits and, if you smoke, do consider giving up. Too much alcohol and tobacco is harmful to bones.

## **Talk to your doctor**

If you are worried that you may have fragile bones (for example, if you have fallen over recently and broken a bone, or you've noticed that you are losing height and developing a stoop), do go and talk to your family doctor. Your doctor will be able to assess whether you are at risk or are suffering from osteoporosis. If you already have fragile bones, your doctor will be able to advise you on suitable treatments which will prevent further bone loss.

## Useful contacts

### Disabled Living Foundation

380–384 Harrow Road

London

W9 2HU

Helpline: 0845 130 9177

Web: [www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

The Disabled Living Foundation can give you information about gadgets and adaptations which make everyday life easier and may help prevent falls.

### National Osteoporosis Society

Camerton

Bath

BA2 0PJ

Tel: 01761 471771

Helpline: 0845 450 0230

Web: [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk)

The National Osteoporosis Society is a charity set up to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of this disabling disease. The society provides advice and information on all aspects of osteoporosis through its medical helpline and information booklets, as well as offering people with osteoporosis support through its network of local groups.

## Contacting our services

### Information and advice

**Care fees** Call 0500 76 74 76 (freephone) or use the form in [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

**Benefits, care and housing options** In Britain, call SeniorLine (0808 800 6565 or, in Northern Ireland, 0808 808 7575).

**Equity release/home reversion/home income plans** Call 0845 2300 820.

**Wills and legacies** Call 020 7239 1965 for our free will information pack or to arrange a visit from a specialist advisor.

**Employment and job skills** Call the Third Age Employment Network on 020 7843 1590.

### Home support

**Home security and fire safety devices** Call the HandyVan service on 01255 473999.

**Immediate-response/monitoring service (24-hour)** to help protect people living alone. Call SeniorLink, 01255 473999.

**Gifted housing** Support service to help people stay independent in their own homes. Call 01225 447800.

### Quality of life

**Transport** Our SeniorMobility scheme helps voluntary groups provide transport in their communities. Call 020 7239 1825.

**Home shopping** Items to make everyday living easier, safer, more comfortable and more enjoyable. For a catalogue, call 0870 770 0441.

**Insurance** Travel and motor\* insurance services with no age barriers; also home and pet insurance. Call 0800 41 31 80.

### Help in a crisis

**SeniorLink** 24-hour immediate-response service (England, Scotland and Wales). Call 01255 473999.

**CareLine** (Northern Ireland). Call 02890 230 666.

\*Motor insurance is not available to Northern Ireland residents

Help the Aged produces 24 free advice leaflets (see inside for full list). These are available from the Information Resources Team at the address below, email [adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk) or fax 0870 770 3282.

April 2006

© Help the Aged CS/00 ID5464 04/06 Company limited by guarantee Registered in England no 1263446 Registered charity no 272786

## Fighting for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas,

### WE WILL:

**COMBAT POVERTY** wherever older people's lives are blighted by lack of money, and cut the number of preventable deaths from hunger, cold and disease

**REDUCE ISOLATION** so that older people no longer feel confined to their own home, forgotten or cut off from society

**CHALLENGE NEGLECT** to ensure that older people do not suffer inadequate health and social care, or the threat of abuse

**DEFEAT AGEISM** to ensure that older people are not ignored or denied the dignity and equality that are theirs by right

**PREVENT FUTURE DEPRIVATION** by improving prospects for employment, health and well-being so that dependence in later life is reduced

Head Office, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

T 020 7278 1114 F 020 7278 1116

E [info@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:info@helptheaged.org.uk) [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)