

# Have you broken a bone?



## What should you do if you have broken a bone easily?

Talk to your doctor or healthcare practitioner

1. Find out if you are at risk of further fractures. Ask about a 'fracture risk assessment' or 'bone check'. This means looking at factors that influence your bone strength such as your age and medical history. It will help you and your doctors understand why your bones may be more fragile than expected and also show whether you need a drug treatment to reduce the risk of further broken bones.
2. Ask whether or not you need to have a bone-density scan. A bone-density scan, which is painless, is able to determine the amount of bone in your skeleton. It can be of help in deciding whether or not you would benefit from drug treatment.
3. Make lifestyle changes. Eating healthily and taking regular weight-bearing exercise can help to keep bones strong. Keeping active and doing exercises to improve muscle strength, balance and coordination will help prevent falls (and therefore fractures!). Get more information about this from our publications.



Weight-bearing exercise is any exercise in which you are supporting your own body weight through your feet and legs.

4. Ask whether or not you need a drug treatment to reduce your risk of fracture. For those at high risk, drug treatments can reduce your risk of further fracture by up to a half.
5. Talk to your doctor if you have fallen more than once in the past year. Advice on staying steady is available at specialist falls clinics.

The National Osteoporosis Society is focusing on this issue. **STOP AT ONE** is a campaign to encourage anyone over 50 who has broken a bone to have a bone check to find out whether they are at risk of osteoporosis.



 National  
Osteoporosis  
Society

✓ **Over 50?**  
✓ **Broken a bone?**

**Find out about  
osteoporosis  
and if you need  
a bone check.**

STOP AT ONE  
[www.nos.org.uk/stopatone](http://www.nos.org.uk/stopatone)

**0845 130 3076**

Visit our website [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk) for more information.

## For osteoporosis information and support contact our Helpline:

 **0845 450 0230** or **01761 472721**

 **nurses@nos.org.uk**

## To order an information pack or other publications:

 **0845 130 3076** or **01761 471771**

 **info@nos.org.uk**

**Our publications are available free of charge, but as a charity, we would appreciate any donation you are able to give to support our work. Or why not join us as a member to receive our quarterly magazine, packed with useful information, tips and the latest medical news?**

 **01761 473287**

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



Camerton, Bath, BA2 0PJ  
General email: [info@nos.org.uk](mailto:info@nos.org.uk)

National Osteoporosis Society is a registered charity No. 1102712 in England and Wales and no. SC039755 in Scotland.

Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no. 4995013

NOS 00207 Published November 2014.

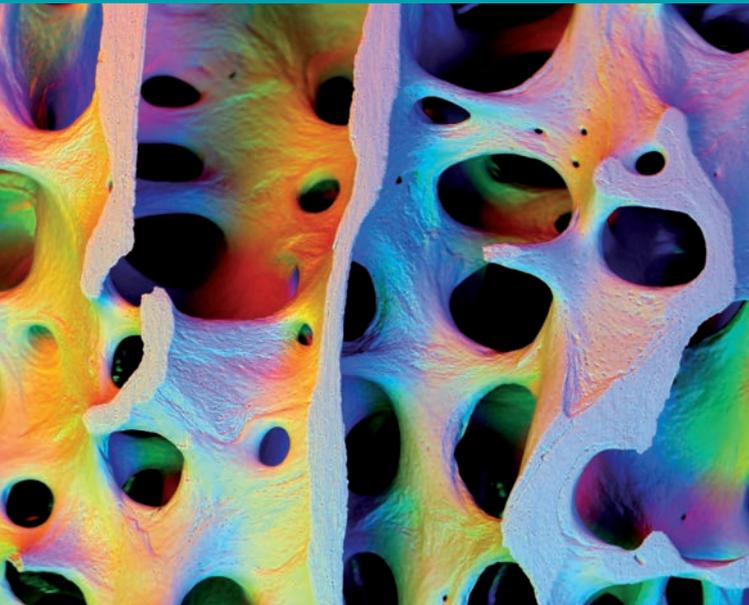
# What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis occurs when the struts which make up the mesh-like structure within bones become thin, causing them to become fragile and break easily, often following a minor bump or fall.



Broken bones which occur easily are often referred to as 'fragility fractures'. The terms 'fracture' and 'broken bone' mean the same thing.

Strong, dense bone



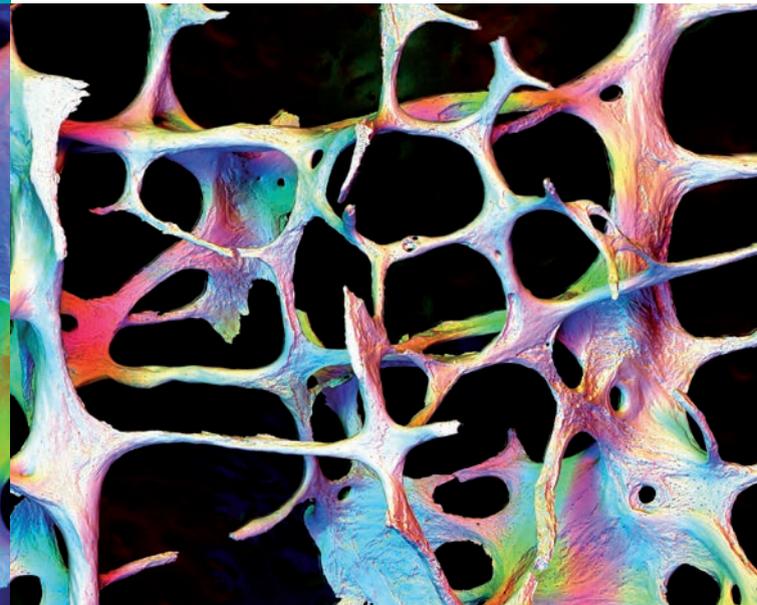
## Should you be worried that your broken bone may be a sign of osteoporosis?

If you have broken a bone easily, it may be a sign that your bones are fragile and that you may be at increased risk of breaking more bones. Not all broken bones are an indication of bone fragility - those of concern occur after mild trauma such as a fall from a standing height or less.

## What are the most common fractures related to osteoporosis?

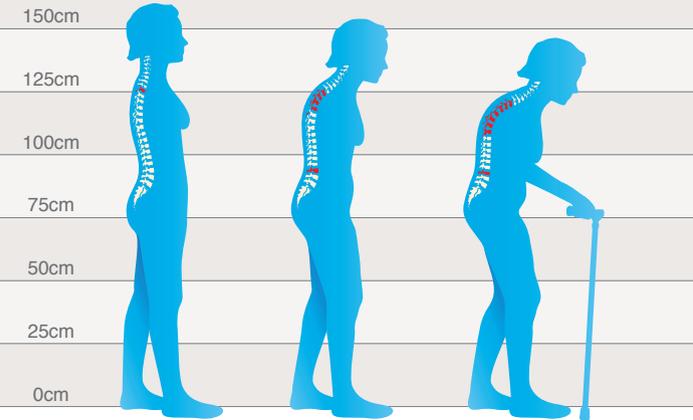
Hip, wrist and spine fractures are most commonly related to osteoporosis. However, any bone that breaks easily in men and women over the age of 50 is likely to be related in some way to bone fragility.

Fragile, osteoporotic bone



# What are the consequences of osteoporosis and broken bones?

Osteoporosis is not in itself a painful condition but the broken bones that result from osteoporosis can cause pain and other problems, including difficulty with mobility and undertaking usual daily activities. Broken bones usually heal normally, although there can be long-term effects. Breaking a hip, for example, can have a major impact on your ability to live independently. It can also create a real fear of falling and make you cautious about performing everyday activities.



## What is a spinal fracture and how can it affect me?

Fractures due to osteoporosis in the spine (vertebrae) occur when the bones become squashed or compressed because of their reduced strength. Sometimes they are referred to as 'crushed', 'collapsed' or 'wedged' depending on how the bone is affected. A 'compression fracture' is a good way of describing what happens.

Spinal fractures can occur after a fall although, in some people with fragile bones, they may occur following usual activities such as bending or lifting. Spinal fractures can cause severe back pain but sometimes they cause little or no symptoms. As with other fractures they generally heal normally, although the change in the shape of the bone is irreversible. If there is more than one fracture, this can lead to a reduction in height and also a change in spinal shape. This may cause other problems including chronic back pain, shortness of breath, protruding stomach, indigestion and, in women, stress incontinence.