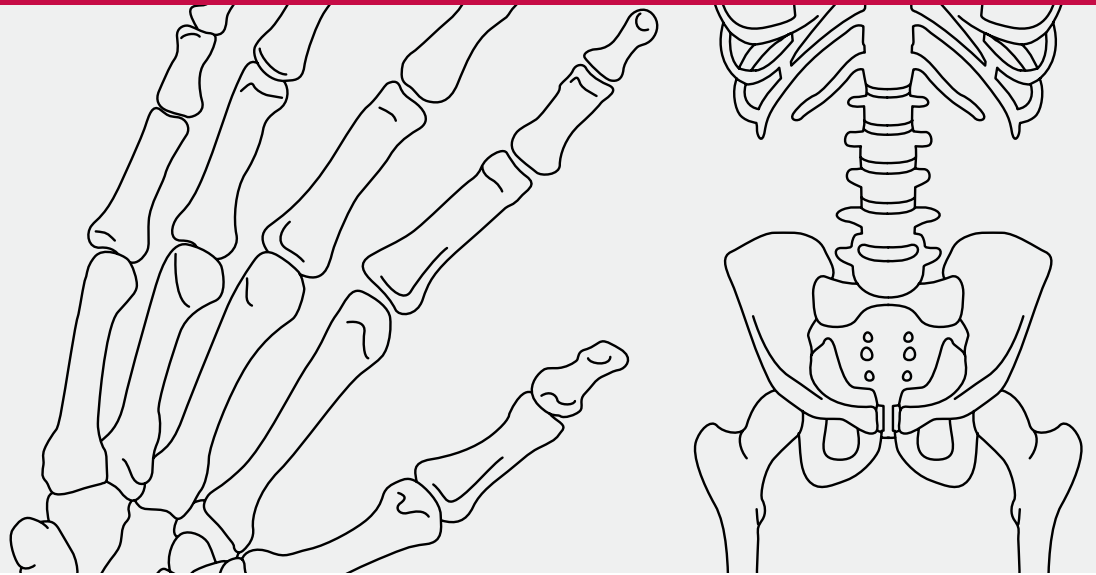


# Healthy Bones



## 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

- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money
- Making a Will
- What Can You Claim?

### Housing and home safety leaflets

- Care Homes
- Computers and the Internet
- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Options
- Keep Out the Cold
- Your Safety
- Your Security

### Health leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Elder Abuse
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Staying Active and Independent
- 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 [adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:adviceleaflets@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**.

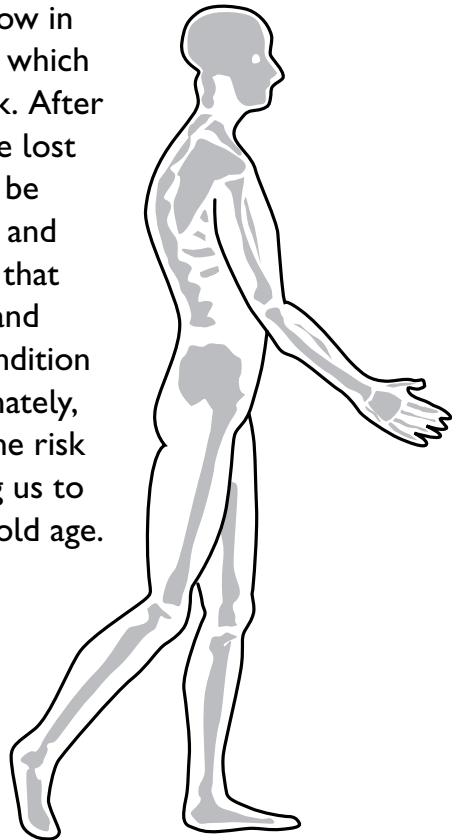
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**It is very important to keep our bones healthy throughout our lives. The skeleton isn't a dead coat hanger – it's a living tissue which needs to be nourished and exercised to keep it strong. Like other parts of the body it has to be protected from 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 our mid twenties, at which point bone density reaches its peak. After the age of 35, 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**

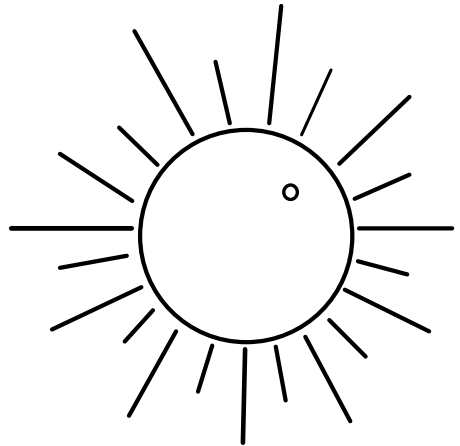
One in two women and one in five men over 50 will experience a broken bone, mainly because of poor bone

health. 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.

As well as being very painful, coping with a broken bone can make independent living difficult and may cause long-term problems with mobility. With approximately three 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 experiencing broken bones.

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



## Avoiding falls

As you get older, you are more likely to have a fall, so 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:

- 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 children 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 they can't be tripped over.
- 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 to pick up items which are light. 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 leaflet *Fitter Feet* has more advice on practical tips for caring for your feet.
- Some medicines can make you feel faint or unsteady. Let your doctor know if you ever feel like this after taking medication. They may want to change the dose or medicine.

Our free advice leaflet, *Your Safety* has 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*.

## Enjoying 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, kale and broccoli
- nuts and tahini
- tofu
- dried fruit such as figs, prunes, raisins and dates

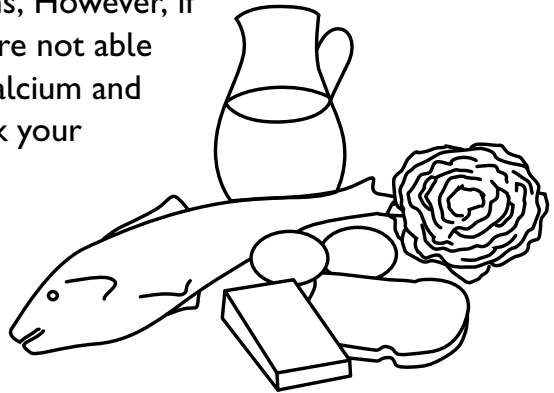
### Foods containing vitamin D:

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

For more information on diet, contact the **National Osteoporosis Society** for their *Healthy Bones – facts about food* leaflet (see page 10 for its contact details).

As you get older, your body is less efficient at absorbing calcium. Experts recommend that older people have a dietary intake of 700 milligrams (mg) of calcium and 10 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin D a day. A third of a pint of milk contains 225mg of calcium and a 100 gram pot of yoghurt has 122mg.

Vitamin D is needed for calcium to be properly absorbed. Even in the UK climate, most people gain sufficient vitamin D for the year by being outside for 15 to 20 minutes, three or four times a week in the summer months. 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.



## Having a healthy lifestyle

- Try to take regular exercise. Weight-bearing exercise keeps bones strong. If you have osteoporosis you may need to be careful of vigorous exercise but it's important to stay active and find something you enjoy. 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 *Staying Active and Independent* suggests how you can keep active. Help the Aged also produces a home exercise booklet called *Strength*

*and Balance Exercises* priced at £6. Call our Publications department on 020 7239 1946 to order a copy. You could also contact the **National Osteoporosis Society** for its leaflet *Exercise and osteoporosis* leaflet (see page 10 for its contact details).

- Keep the amount you drink within the recommended limits. The Department of Health runs a campaign called Know your limits which gives advice and information about drinking sensibly. Visit its website at [www.units.nhs.uk](http://www.units.nhs.uk) Or call Drinkline on 0800 876 6778. If you smoke, consider giving up. Contact the NHS Quit Smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 for information and help to give up smoking. Or visit <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> Too much alcohol and tobacco is harmful to bones.

## Talking 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), go to talk to your doctor. Your doctor will be able to assess whether you are at risk of developing, or have, 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 equipment and adaptations which make everyday life easier and may help prevent falls.

### National Osteoporosis Society

Camerton

Bath BA2 0PJ

Tel: 0845 130 3076

Helpline: 0845 450 0230

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

The National Osteoporosis Society is dedicated to improving the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of osteoporosis in the UK. The charity provides advice and information on all aspects of osteoporosis through its helpline and information booklets, as well as offering people with osteoporosis support through its network of local groups.

## Contacting our services

### Home support

**Gifted Housing** A unique range of support services and care benefits provided to home donors. Call 01225 447 800.

**HandyVan** A free home security and safety service offered to older people who meet a charitable criteria. Call 01255 473 999 for more information.

**Home shopping** High-quality, affordable items to make everyday living easier, safer, more comfortable and more enjoyable. Shop online at [www.helptheaged.org.uk/shopping](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/shopping) or call 0800 169 1609 for a catalogue.

**Insurance** Home cover. Call 0800 022 3175 or visit [www.intunegroup.co.uk/home\\*](http://www.intunegroup.co.uk/home*)

**SeniorLink** A home telephone service that connects you to a response centre for emergency assistance or reassurance (24 hours). Call 0845 053 2306.

### Information and advice

**Care Fees Advice Service** Specialist advice for anyone entering or already in care, regardless of means. Call freephone 0500 76 74 76 or visit [www.helptheaged.org.uk/carefees](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/carefees)

**SeniorLine** In Great Britain, call freephone 0808 800 6565 or, in Northern Ireland, 0808 808 7575 for free, confidential and impartial advice on benefits, care and housing issues.

**Equity Release Service** Impartial, whole-of-market advice on all aspects of equity release. Call 0845 2300 820 or visit [www.intunegroup.co.uk/equityrelease\\*](http://www.intunegroup.co.uk/equityrelease*)

**Wills Advice Service** Free, confidential advice about making a will, for people of state retirement age. Call 020 7239 1965 for a free information pack.

### Community living

**Insurance** Travel insurance with no age barriers. Call 0800 022 3176 or visit [www.intunegroup.co.uk/travel\\*](http://www.intunegroup.co.uk/travel*)

**Insurance** Motor insurance with no age barriers. Call 0800 022 3174 or visit [www.intunegroup.co.uk/motor\\*](http://www.intunegroup.co.uk/motor*)

**SeniorMobility** Helping older people's groups and projects to purchase vehicles and transport equipment. Call 020 7239 1825.

\* **intune group ltd** is a wholly owned subsidiary of Help the Aged. Any profits generated from selling products go directly to support charitable activities.

April 2009

Age Concern England (charity number 261794) has merged with Help the Aged (charity number 272786) to form Age UK, a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England: registered office address 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ, company number 6825798, registered charity number 1128267. Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age NI, Age Cymru. ID8177 04/09 Copyright © Age UK 2009

## 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



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