

Keeping it Together

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become thin, decreasing bone strength and leading to an increased risk of breaking a bone.

Breaking a bone is referred to medically as experiencing a bone fracture. Osteoporosis is often called the 'silent thief' because bone loss occurs without symptoms.

Surprisingly often, people find out they have osteoporosis after they have fractured a bone. The most common fractures are in the hip, spine, wrist and shoulder.

Why?

Fractures in Residential Aged Care are very common. They can cause severe pain, disability and be fatal. If we can reduce serious falls and fractures, we can reduce pain, immobility, hospital transfers and most importantly improve quality of life!

How?

Start the conversation on how to reduce fractures! Know your risk, become aware of your treatment options and work together.

Ask yourself

- Have I ever broken a hip or bone since age 55?
- Has anyone in my family broken a bone or had osteoporosis?
- Has my back posture changed so that I am more hunched over?
- Am I shorter now than in my early adulthood?
- Do I take medications for osteoporosis?
- Have I been asked my goal of care?

Ask your leadership or administration

- How can we make sure residents have diets rich in calcium and vitamin D?
- How can we make sure residents benefit from vitamin D supplements?
- Are our staff trained to identify residents at risk for fractures?
- Do we have osteoporosis and fracture prevention as part of our falls program?
- What interventions do we have to prevent fractures and fractures from falls?

Ask your Physician/Care Team Lead

- Am I on, or should I be on osteoporosis medications?
- Am I on the appropriate Calcium and Vitamin D therapy?(older adults)
- Am I doing the right resistance and balance exercises to strengthen my muscles and improve my balance?
- Am I doing safe transfers to protect my spine and other bones?

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A high risk resident might be:

- 85 years or older
- History of recent falls/fractures in the last 6 months
- Walking/wandering
- Thin or slim
- Living with dementia or some cognitive impairment



Talk to Your Health Care Provider

If you are concerned about falls, fractures and osteoporosis or care for someone in residential aged care, talk to a health care provider about fall and fracture risks.



Consider Exercise that Improves Strength and Balance

It is important to talk to your health care provider to help you identify safe ways to exercise and be active.



Consider Calcium and Vitamin D Supplementation

Osteoporosis Australia recommends 3 – 5 serves of calcium rich food per day, depending on age and stage of life through diet. If dietary calcium requirements cannot be met through food, consider doses of 500 600 mg calcium/day as supplements. This dose range is considered safe and effective.

Most people require sun exposure to meet levels of Vitamin D, because sufficient amounts of vitamin D cannot be met through food. Daily supplements of 600 – 2000 units of vitamin D may be required for certain people, depending on their age and level of exposure.



Make Your Personal Spaces Safe

Consider ways to make your living spaces safe to prevent falls. Think about anti-slip shoes and slippers, floors free of throw- rugs and clutter, supportive walking aids, good lighting at night and more.



Consider Wearing Hip Protectors

If you have broken a hip in the past, have fallen, and are fearful of falling again; think about wearing hip protectors. Your hips are worth saving!

Looking for more information on how to keep your bones healthy? See:

Healthy Bones Australia, Calcium & Bone Health <https://healthybonesaustralia.org.au/your-bone-health/calcium/>

Healthy Bones Australia Vitamin D & Bone Health <https://healthybonesaustralia.org.au/your-bone-health/vitamin-d-bone-health/>