

Osteoporosis fractures: prevention and recovery

Bone is a living tissue which ages without causing any pain. If you have osteoporosis your bones become fragile and can break. After breaking a bone most people recover, but their autonomy and quality of life can be affected and sometimes people even die from the complications caused by fractures.

How can you prevent fractures?

To prevent breaking your bones you need to prevent osteoporosis. So, in addition to eating foods rich in calcium throughout your life, taking regular exercise is essential because:

- It keeps your bones and muscles strong and so keeps you strong and safe.
- It keeps you agile, improves your coordination and balance, as well as your ability to walk, and helps stop you from falling.
- It improves your general health (physical, mental and emotional) which affects your ability to live life to the full.

Walking 30 minutes a day, 5 days every week (preferably outdoors), walking the dog, going dancing or walking up steps are ways to keep your bones healthy.



How can you recover from a fracture?

Once the initial immobilisation period is over you should start to do exercises to recover mobility and muscle.

After an osteoporosis fracture **you should:**

- Improve your **balance** and coordination to help you walk better, gain confidence and overcome your fear of falling.
- Do **aerobic exercise**, like Nordic Walking, dancing, static or elliptical cycling, Tai Chi, Pilates or water activities which involve no risk of falling and also improve your general physical health. If you attend supervised activities you should tell the instructor about any previous health issues so as to avoid further injury.
- **Tone your muscles (gain strength):** It is important to strengthen your leg muscles (mainly your quadriceps and buttocks). This will help you move about more safely and do day-to-day activities like bending, sitting down and standing up more easily. You can also exercise your arms with elastic bands to improve your upper body muscles.
- **Improve your mobility:** You'll have to regain mobility in the injured area through the exercises that your physiotherapist gives you.
- **Good posture:** You'll have to improve your posture when you undertake day-to-day activities to avoid positions that can lead to injury.

What should you avoid?

- High impact activities, like running or jumping, which may increase bone density more but also put you more at risk of having falls and so are only advisable for very agile people.
- Sudden jerky movements of your spine (flexing and stretching and rotations), because of possibly weak vertebra.
- Lifting heavy weights.
- Exercises or postures that involve shifting weight (carrying bags, lifting objects or moving furniture that weighs too much, pushing the car...).