

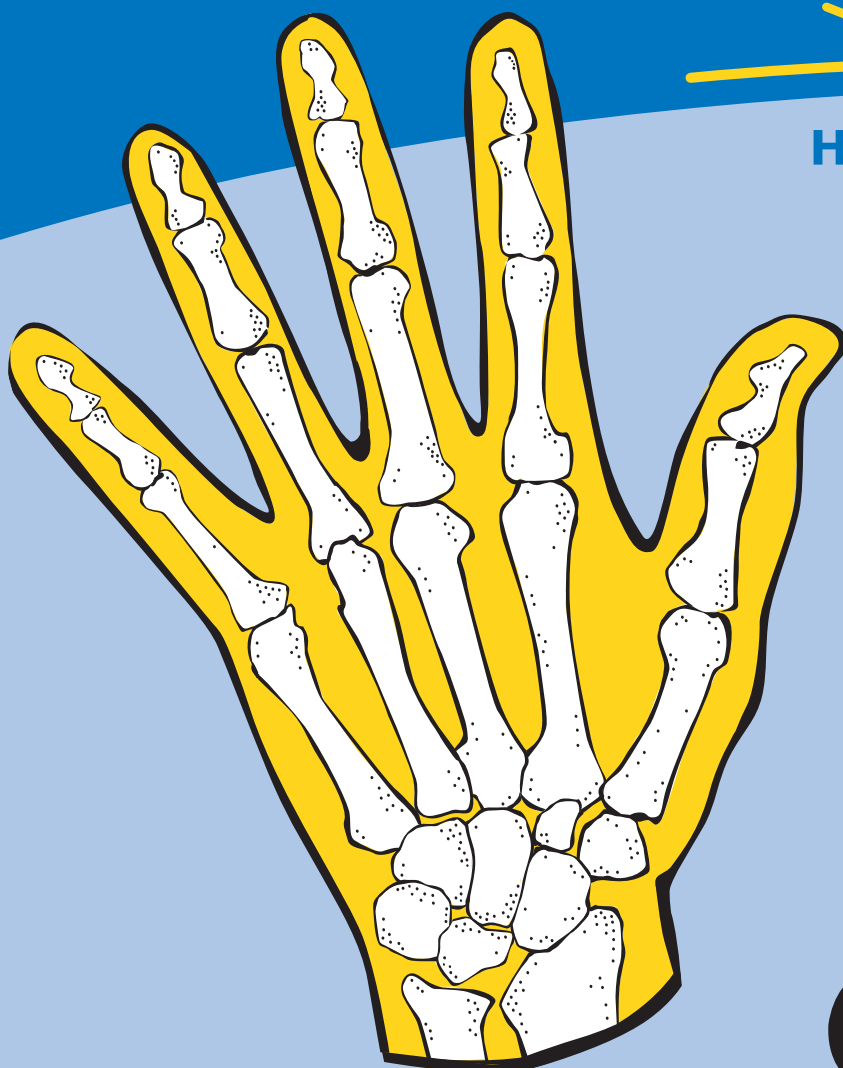
Information & Advice

Helping you to help yourself

Healthy Bones



Help the Aged



Endorsed by



National
Osteoporosis
Society

This leaflet is endorsed by the National Osteoporosis Society.
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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

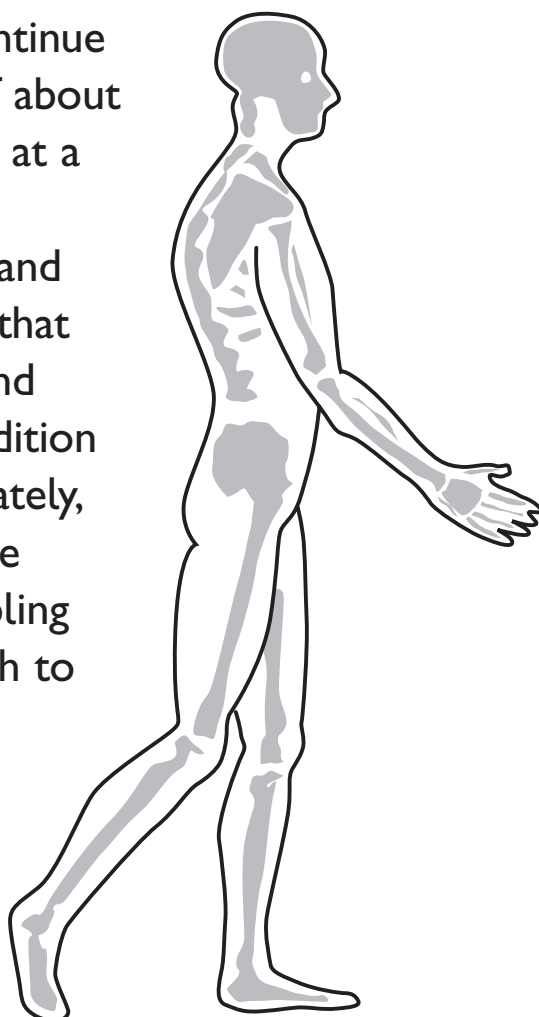
Why do healthy bones matter?	Page 4
Bone health	Page 4
Avoiding broken bones	Page 5
Avoiding falls	Page 6
Enjoy a well balanced diet	Page 7
Have a healthy lifestyle	Page 8
Talk to your doctor	Page 9
Useful contacts	Page 10

Why do healthy bones matter?

It is very important to keep our bones healthy throughout our lives. The skeleton isn't a dead coathanger - it's 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.



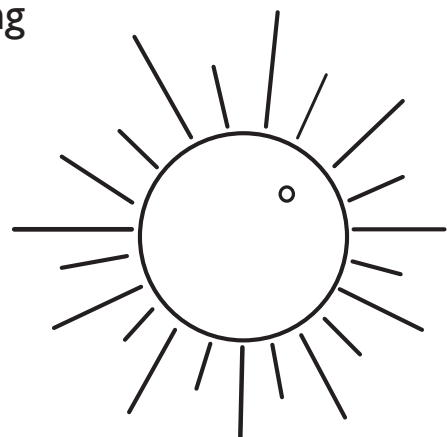
Avoiding broken bones

One in three women and one in 12 men over 50 will suffer a broken bone 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.

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 sufferers in the UK alone, osteoporosis 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, keep-fit, skipping and dancing.
- 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, 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:

- Look out for anything that might make you trip or slip. Make sure that carpets and rugs are fixed down well and there are no trailing electrical wires. Avoid leaving slippery objects like magazines on the floor.
- Be particularly careful when grandchildren are visiting. They may leave toys where you don't expect them, which could easily trip you up.
- 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. 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 sight tests will reassure you that your sight is as good as it can be.
- 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 heels or mules.

Our advice leaflet, 'Safety in Your Home' makes more suggestions on avoiding accidents in the home.

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

Margarine

Breakfast cereals

Oily fish (such as tuna)

Egg yolks

Liver

For more information on diet, together with some recipe ideas, write to the **National Osteoporosis Society** and ask for their 'Diet and Bone Health' booklet priced £3.00 (address on page 10).

As you get older, your body is less efficient at absorbing calcium. Experts recommend that older people have an intake of 700 mg 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 like walking to the shops will help keep your bones healthy. It also improves your balance and co-ordination which helps to prevent falls. Our 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. He or she 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

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

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 its series of detailed information booklets, as well as offering people with osteoporosis support through its network of local groups.

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
- Managing Your Savings
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

Housing and home safety leaflets

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

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

Leaflets are free of charge and available in single copies for individuals or in large quantities for organisations. You can get leaflets in the following ways:

- by writing to the Information Resources Team
- by email on adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk
- by faxing on 020 7239 1839

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