

## Patient information factsheet

# Fragility fractures

We have given you this factsheet because you have had, or are at risk of a type of broken bone known as a 'fragility fracture' and have been placed under the care of the fracture prevention service. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If you would like more information, please speak to a member of your healthcare team or call us using the contact details at the end of this factsheet.

### What is a fragility fracture?

A fragility fracture is a broken bone caused by a fall from a standing height or less. Fragility fractures often affect the larger bones of the body such as the back, hip or wrist.

Bones are strong and usually don't break from a simple fall, but as we get older, our bones become weaker. Osteoporosis (a condition which leads to thinning of the bones) and other bone conditions can increase this effect of age and further weaken bones. This means that even a low-impact fall from a standing height can cause a broken bone.

### What happens next?

This will depend on a number of things, including your age and medical history. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire and/or attend a bone health check to assess your risk of developing osteoporosis.

We will use an assessment tool to calculate your risk of another fracture. You will be asked to give details of your age, height and weight, gender, other related conditions you may have, or if you are taking steroids. We may also ask about your use of cigarettes and alcohol.

If needed, treatment to strengthen your bones may be recommended.

### Why is a bone health assessment important?

Bone health assessments:

- allow you to start treatment earlier to improve your bone health
- reduce uncertainty about whether you need treatment to reduce your risk of breaking another bone
- provide information which helps ensure you are prescribed the right medication.

The risk of a further fracture is increased in the first two years following a fragility fracture, so it's important that bone health assessments are carried out promptly.

If a bone health check is not automatically provided for you following your fragility fracture, speak to your GP.

### Bone density scan

You may need to have a bone density scan (DXA) as part of your assessment. People who suffer a fracture may have generally weaker bones that are more likely to break. DXA scans

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can be used to measure the strength of bones. A DXA scan usually takes less than 20 minutes, is painless and does not make people feel claustrophobic. However, you will have to lie flat on a couch during the appointment, so if this is difficult for you please let us know in advance.

## Falls

Anyone over 50 years of age who is treated for a fragility fracture following a fall should have a falls assessment. This will be carried out by the fracture liaison service (FLS) or another community-based professional care team where appropriate.

Falls are the most frequent and serious type of accident in older people. However, falling can be prevented or reduced. A falls assessment will identify whether there are specific things that can be done to help prevent future falls.

## What can I do to help myself?

- Follow a healthy, balanced diet and try to maintain a healthy weight/body mass index (BMI) between 20-25.
- Reduce your alcohol intake to no more than 14 units per week.
- Stop smoking.
- Do regular weight-bearing exercise. If you are unsure how your diagnosis may affect what you can and can't do, speak to your GP or health professional.
- Take the time to respond to follow-up questionnaires about your bone health and falls treatment.
- See your GP if you have had a fragility fracture but have not received a fracture risk assessment or if you are worried about your fracture risk.

It is very important to continue to take any medications you are prescribed to strengthen your bones. If you are having problems taking your medicines, seek advice from your GP.

## Contact us

Fracture prevention service

Telephone: **023 8120 2182** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Email: [fls@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:fls@uhs.nhs.uk)

## Useful links

NHS website: Osteoporosis

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis/)

Royal Osteoporosis society

[www.theros.org.uk](http://www.theros.org.uk)

Tel: **0808 800 0035**

Email: [info@theros.org.uk](mailto:info@theros.org.uk)

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit [www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)