

# Prevent hip fractures

As a woman grows older, she needs to be aware of what she can do to maintain her health. After the age of menopause, a woman's bones may lose density (a condition known as **osteoporosis**) and therefore break more easily.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation has estimated that more than 10 million people in the United States have osteoporosis. An additional 19 million have **low bone mass** (a condition that places them at increased

risk for osteoporosis and fractures).

A study in the October 13, 1999, issue of *JAMA* tested the effectiveness of a particular drug to reduce the risk of fractures in postmenopausal women diagnosed with osteoporosis. The study found that daily doses of the drug were effective in reducing the risk of fractures by about 40% over 3 years and also helped increase bone density.

Talk with your doctor about specific ways to prevent osteoporosis and hip fractures.

## TO HELP PREVENT OSTEOPOROSIS AND FRACTURES:

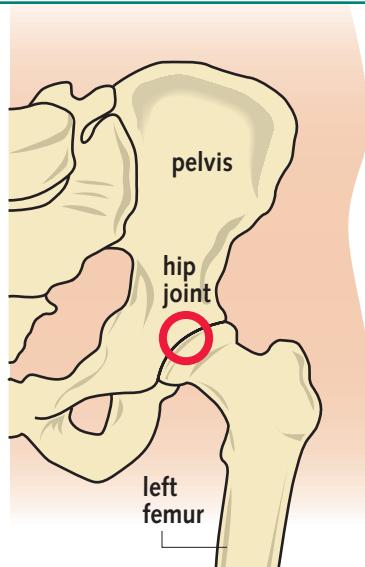
- Consume enough calcium (at least 1200 mg per day; for example, there is about 300 mg of calcium in a cup of low-fat milk) and vitamin D (between 400 and 800 IU daily for individuals at risk of deficiency; for example, there is 100 IU of vitamin D in 1 cup of most types of milk).
- Get regular weight-bearing and muscle-strengthening exercise (such as walking and working with weights or machines that build muscles and bone, both of which decline with age) to reduce the risk of falls and fractures.
- Avoid smoking and don't drink more than moderate amounts of alcohol. Both are associated with a higher risk of osteoporosis.

## HIP FRACTURES:

Fractures and their complications are among the serious consequences of osteoporosis. The most common fractures are those of the hip, spine, and wrist, but hip fractures are considered the most serious. Hip fractures can cause death and disability, with only one-third of the sufferers of hip fractures being able to regain the level of independence they had before their injury. It is best to try to prevent hip fractures from occurring in the first place by taking the necessary precautions.

## IF YOU FALL:

If you or someone you know falls and you suspect a fracture, get immediate medical help. All falls, even if minor, should be brought to the attention of your doctor.



## PREVENT FALLS:

Falls can be caused by medications that affect your alertness or balance. Falls can also be caused by poor vision or hearing; impaired muscle strength, coordination, or reflexes; and by diseases that affect balance. Some ways to prevent falls at home and outside include:

- Remove all loose wires, cords, and throw rugs from floors. Make sure all other rugs are anchored and smooth.
- Install grab bars and non-skid tape or rubber mats in the bathtub or shower and in the kitchen near the sink and stove.
- Make sure all hand rails on stairways are secure.
- Make sure the house is well lit. Turn lights on if you get up during the night.
- Wear sturdy, rubber-soled shoes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases--National Resource Center  
800/624-BONE  
202/466-4315 (TTY) or  
[www.osteoporosis.org](http://www.osteoporosis.org)
- National Osteoporosis Foundation  
Department MQ  
P.O. Box 96616  
Washington, D.C. 20077-7456 or  
[www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)
- National Institute on Aging  
*Preventing Falls and Fractures*  
800/222-2225  
800/222-4225 (TTY) or  
[www.nih.gov/nia](http://www.nih.gov/nia)

## INFORM YOURSELF:

To find this and previous *JAMA* Patient Pages, check out the AMA's Web site at [www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm](http://www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm). A previous *JAMA* Patient Page on osteoporosis was published on May 13, 1998.

Additional Sources: National Osteoporosis Foundation's *Physician's Guide to Prevention and Treatment of Osteoporosis*

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