



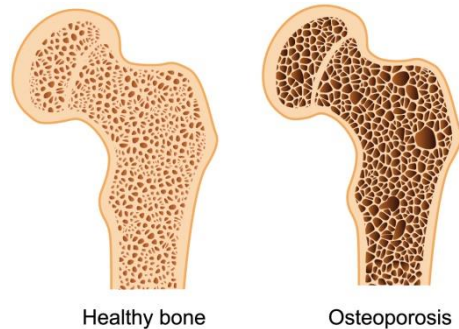
Osteoporosis and Fragility Fractures

Patient information Leaflet

January 2019

Osteoporosis is a condition that is characterised by bone weakness due to a **low bone density**. This means there is a greater risk of breaking bones from minor injuries. Osteoporosis is often diagnosed only after a painful fracture has occurred; these are known as "**Fragility Fractures**". There are several associated fracture sites, including:

- Wrist (Distal Radius)
- Shoulder (Proximal Humerus)
- Spinal bone (Vertebral)
- Hip (Proximal femur/Neck of femur)



This is a silent condition and will commonly first present with a minor wrist fracture. Over time though, if left untreated, Osteoporosis can lead to a more serious fracture at the hip, leading to a lengthy hospital admission and likely a major operation.

There are some factors leading to Osteoporosis that we have no control over such as a family history of the condition, older age or the female gender (particularly after the menopause). However, there are several causes which are controllable and if addressed can

slow the progression of Osteoporosis, and ultimately, reduce the chance of suffering a further fragility fracture. These include:

- **Reducing (or quitting) smoking** – smoking reduces the density of bone. If you require any help with this then contact your GP or the hospital smoking cessation support team.
- **Reduce alcohol intake** – excessive drinking can weaken bones. Try cutting down the number of days when a drink is consumed per week and the amount of drinks per day.
- **Increase exercise** – improves balance as well as strengthens both muscle and bone. Why not try cycling, yoga, or tai chi? Simple activities such as walking can be very effective too!
- **Increase sunlight exposure** – your body uses it to create Vitamin D which it needs to strengthen your bones. Your GP can help by prescribing calcium and/or vitamin supplements, if indicated.
- **Ask your doctor if medications will help** – there are some medications that can help avoid bone loss or even strengthen your bones. Always seek medical advice before starting.

Some medications such as **steroids**, when taken regularly, can also increase the risk of Osteoporosis. You should not stop these without discussing the pros and cons of stopping, or limiting the use of these, with your doctor. Please do not stop any prescribed medications without first discussing it with your doctor.

Your doctor may also recommend a **bone scan (DEXA scan)** to further investigate your bone health and will help them to assess your risk of further fractures. It is important to remember that this will not treat osteoporosis by itself.

We would like to **prevent fragility fractures** from occurring in the first place. The aim of this information leaflet is to empower you, the patient, to be actively involved in the management of your bone health. Hopefully these few tips will help you to strengthen your bones, which in turn may prevent future fractures and ultimately, lead to an improved quality of life for yourself and your family.

Useful Resources

- National Osteoporosis Society: charity with information and support networks
<https://nos.org.uk/>
- NHS Choices: easily-accessible summary for osteoporosis
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Osteoporosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- Active Tameside: local advice on staying active and keeping fit
<http://www.activetameside.com/>
- Tameside Council: smoking cessation advice
<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/health/smoking>
- Drink Aware: recommended allowances and advice on how to cut down
<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk>

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

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Document control information

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Date Created: Janaury 2019