

Calvary Community Care Not All Breaks Are Lucky

Falls and Injury Prevention – How not to fall for it



Even though most falls occur in the home and don't result in serious injury, you may be unable to get up without help.

Speak with your doctor about how to keep your bones strong.

The damage done by any fall depends on how, where and when you land, how strong your bones and skin are, and how quickly help comes.

Maintain bone strength

People with osteoporosis are more likely to break a bone as a result of a fall than those with healthy bones. You may not even be aware you have osteoporosis. The risk factors are:

Family history – having a direct relative who has had an osteoporotic fracture (break).

You are more likely to develop osteoporosis if you are a Caucasian or an Asian female.

Age – Being over 60 years of age.

Medical history – certain medical conditions and medicines can increase your risk of osteoporosis, including:

- low hormone levels – for women, if you had delayed puberty or early menopause, and for men, if you have low testosterone
- conditions that make nutrient absorption more difficult, such as coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease

- thyroid conditions, such as over active thyroid or parathyroid
- chronic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, or chronic liver or kidney disease
- corticosteroids used to treat asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and other inflammatory conditions, and other medications such as those used for epilepsy, cancer, and some mental illnesses. It is important to keep taking these medications if you have been prescribed them, but it is worth discussing your bone health with your doctor.

Lifestyle factors – such as low levels of physical activity, smoking, excessive alcohol intake, and being underweight or overweight

Low calcium intake and low Vitamin D levels.

Hip protectors are one way of reducing the risk of a hip fracture from a fall

Hip protectors may reduce the risk of a fracture as a result of a fall by helping absorb the impact on the hip bone. 'Hip protectors' (plastic shields or foam pads) are placed inside specially designed underwear and positioned over the hip to protect it in the event of a fall. They are particularly recommended for people who are thin, have osteoporosis (brittle bones) or who are falling frequently. You can view the equipment catalogue from the Independent Living Centre for the types available (see below for details).

Talk to your doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about hip protectors.



As difficult as the idea may be for you to consider, try to think about the things you can do that will not cause you harm or injury. Arrange for someone else to do the more physically difficult activities. **Don't put pride before the fall!**

What you can do

- Maintain healthy bones (See 'Strong Muscles and Bones')
- Hazard proof your home (see 'Hazard Proofing your Home- Practical Ways to Stay Independent and Safe.')
- Attend a Falls Clinic if you have history of a fall.
- Plan what you will do in case of a fall. This will help you feel not only safer but more confident, independent and in control of your life. (see 'Plan what to do if you Fall')

Need support? Calvary Community Care can support safe, independent living at home with a variety of services and expert advice. Call 1300 66 00 22 for more information.

Who can help?

CCC local service centre can assist with extra help at home, and can provide information you may require in order to reduce your risk of injury.

Your doctor can refer you for a bone density test (to assess how strong your bones are), prescribe supplements to assist with bone health, and/or refer you to other health professionals or any services for which you may be eligible.

Pharmacists for advice supplements to aid bone strength.

Independent Living Centre provides information about products and services to help people remain independent and improve their quality of life.
ph. 1300 885 886 or <http://ilcaustralia.org.au/>

Your local Council

Osteoporosis Australia

ph. 1800 242 141 or <http://www.osteoporosis.org.au/>

A Falls Clinic is a specialist clinic which sees people who have fallen. The aim is to discover why your fall happened and to treat any underlying problems that may increase your chances of falling. The health of your bones will also be assessed, as you may be at particular risk of having a fracture.

References

Falls Prevention in SA

'Maintain your independence, health and mobility'

<http://bit.ly/2owm49R>

Arthritis Queensland

'Are you at Risk of Osteoporosis? What causes a Bone to become Weaker?'

<http://bit.ly/2o4c2w0>

Revised and re-published by the Commonwealth of Australia 2011

'Don't Fall For It - A guide to preventing falls for older people'

<http://bit.ly/2nQD5br>

ACC New Zealand *'Standing up to falls. Your guide to preventing falls and protecting your independence'*

<http://bit.ly/2niHAgX>