

Symptom Management

Back symptoms immediately following a spine fracture may range from mild to severe pain. In addition to pain relieving medications, a physical therapy program for pain management can enhance long-term improvement in back pain. Physical therapy programs often include exercises to stretch and strengthen the spinal muscles, massage, and ice and heat treatments which can decrease muscle tightness and the frequency of muscle spasms.

Once the fracture heals and the severe pain is gone, an individual may continue to experience chronic back symptoms. These symptoms are usually due to back and abdominal muscle weakness that lead to muscle fatigue and backache. Backaches can get worse with activities such as forward bending and standing or sitting for long periods of time.

Back extension exercises that improve the strength of back muscles are recommended. Improvement of muscle strength increases support to fragile bones and improves posture. Stronger back muscles may help reduce curvature of the spine caused by multiple spine fractures. Flexion exercises (such as bending forward at the waist) are not recommended.

The goals of a rehabilitative exercise program for the relief of symptoms associated with osteoporosis spine fractures include:

- Decreased backache and muscle fatigue
- Increased tolerance and ability to carry out daily activities
- Gradual return to an active lifestyle to improve sense of well-being

Rehabilitative exercise programs should be under the direction of a physical therapist.



Brochure Developed by the Endocrine Nurses Society



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Osteoporosis: Exercise & Fall Prevention



Role of Exercise

Low bone mass caused by osteoporosis is a major risk for fracture. Several medications are now available to prevent bone loss and reduce fracture risk. However, even with medical therapy, people may continue to experience bone fractures due to falls and injuries.

While exercise may slow age-related bone loss in older individuals, the major goal of an exercise program is not to increase bone mass.

The goals of exercise for individuals with osteoporosis are:

- Increase Muscle Strength
- Improve Balance
- Decrease the risk for falling
- Enhance physical function and well-being
- Minimize symptoms associated with osteoporosis
- Reduce injuries



The Best Kind of Physical Activity

The best type of exercise for reducing the rate of age-related bone loss is weight-bearing activity. Weight-bearing activities are those that require an individual to support their entire body weight. Walking is probably the most frequently recommended weight-bearing activity. It requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere by just about anyone, regardless of age. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes.

It is recommended that you walk for at least 30 minutes, 3-5 times per week.

Other physical activities include dancing, swimming, cycling, tai chi, and resistance training exercises. These muscle strengthening exercises may help increase coordination and balance, reduce the risk of falls, and help maintain muscle mass which provides added protection in case of a fall.

Consult your healthcare professional and get approval before beginning any exercise program. Ask your healthcare professional about a referral to a physical therapist who can design an individualized osteoporosis exercise program that includes balance, endurance, flexibility, strength, and posture training.



Fall Prevention Measures

Falls are the #1 cause of death from injury among older adults. More than 200,000 people over the age of 65 will fall and break a hip each year. Use this fall prevention checklist to see if you are doing everything possible to prevent falling.

We recommend you do the following things to help prevent falls:

- Exercise at least 3 times per week
- Have your hearing tested regularly
- Have your vision tested regularly
- Take time to regain your balance when standing up from a sitting or lying position
- Avoid wet or icy pavement
- Avoid rushing when crossing the street, catching an elevator, answering the phone and other activities
- Make sure hallways and stairs are well lighted and free from clutter
- Place grab bars on the side of your bathtub or shower and toilet
- Limit alcohol intake
- Use a cane, walker, or walking stick if you feel unsteady on your feet or must walk on uneven surfaces
- Wear supportive, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes
- Avoid walking on uneven surfaces
- Keep a light or flashlight within easy reach of your bed
- Remove all throw rugs. Make sure all other rugs are well anchored and smooth