

Are Your Bones Safe?

Help for preventing breaks

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When you think of broken bones your mind probably wanders to a child who has fallen off the jungle gym, or a football player who was injured in a tackle. While risky activities like these may seem like the most common causes for broken bones, they don't top the list for adults. Instead, simple everyday activities often lead to falls that cause debilitating fractures. Maintaining strong bones is crucial in keeping a fall from leading to a break, but there are many additional ways to keep bones safe.

Strong Bones Mean Less Breaks

Children fall several times a day, but they rarely experience broken bones. Their growing bodies are quite resilient. Adults are not so lucky. Our bone mass is in a state of decline. If we aren't diligent about giving our bones the nutrients they need every day- including 1000 to 1300 mg of [calcium](#) and 200-600 IU of Vitamin D, along with a balanced diet that includes vitamin K and magnesium – we can develop weak, porous bones. When bones weaken they break very easily. In fact, even something as simple as a sneeze can cause a fracture in susceptible individuals.

More Muscle Gives Support

Muscle, like bone, declines with age. However, with regular exercise you can keep both tissues strong. Daily [weight-bearing exercise](#) like walking, dancing, or yoga puts impact on bones helping to maintain their density. Other strength-training exercises are also helpful, because strong muscles help to maintain posture and provide better balance. Participating in slow, controlled weight lifting exercises, using exercise tubing, and practicing Pilates can all help to lengthen and strengthen muscles. Since balance is important in preventing falls, exercises that focus on this skill are particularly helpful (i.e. tai chi). Simply practicing balancing on one leg can teach you how to be steady on your feet. Start out slowly by standing behind a chair and shifting all your weight to one leg as you count to 15. Use the chair for support if needed. Then switch sides to work the other leg. Over time you will find that you no longer need the chair. This is a great exercise to practice while watching TV or brushing your teeth.

Prevent Falls

Falls are embarrassing, but they can also be deadly. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation approximately 24 percent of patients aged 50 and over whom broke a hip died in the year following their fracture. In many cases falls can be prevented. Here are some simple tips that we all could use as reminders:

- **Ditch dizziness** – medications can lead to the dizzy feeling that can cause a fall. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medications for those that could have that unpleasant side effect, and be especially cautious after starting a new medication.
- **Care for your eyes** – the wrong eyeglass prescription can also cause dizziness. In addition, difficulty seeing is bound to lead to an accident, so have your eyes checked annually.
- **Travel light** – a heavy purse or bag puts your entire body out of line making it much more difficult to balance. Look for lighter travel gear or bags on wheels to help tote your belongings.
- **Wear sturdy shoes** – poor fitting shoes, high heels, or shoes without treads are dangerous. Look for comfortable shoes with sturdy, rubber soles. And, only wear slippers with slip-proof bottoms.
- **Be on the lookout** – always watch where you are going. It really goes without saying, but losing your focus is a sure way to lose your footing.
- **Go slow** – everyone rushes, it is an unfortunate consequence of our fast paced society, but it is

also a major contributor to accidents. Always plan in more time than you need for activities, so you don't feel pressured to hurry.

- **Toss old throw rugs** – fabric rugs can lead to slips and trips. If you must keep a rug in your bathroom or at your front door, be sure it has a thick skid-proof bottom.

References

CDC. *Preventing Falls Among Older Adults*. last modified 12/8/08. retrieved 12/8/08 [LINK](#)

National Osteoporosis Foundation. *Fast Facts on Osteoporosis*. retrieved 12/8/08 [LINK](#)