

## Managing Symptoms of Prostate Cancer

# Brittle Bones From Hormone Therapy

Hormone treatments for prostate cancer can lead to thin, brittle bones

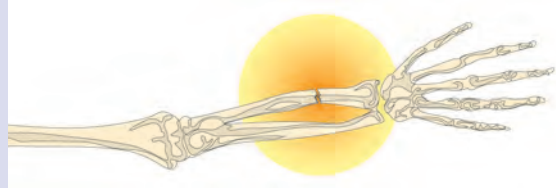
The medical term for this is osteoporosis (*say: os tee oh por OH sis*). This condition is fairly common as people age. But, hormone treatments can increase the chances of it occurring. The danger is that thin, brittle bones break easily. So, it's important to take action to prevent or limit the effects of osteoporosis.

## What can I do?

Talk with your health care team. Ask about your chances of getting osteoporosis. Your doctor or nurse may suggest that you get a painless test called a bone mineral density (BMD) test. It's fast and easy, and shows whether your bones are getting thin and fragile.

Lower your chances of falling. Falls are the #1 reason for broken bones in older adults.

- Wear sturdy, well-fitting shoes for extra support.
- If you live in a cold climate, be careful walking on ice and snow. Put ice grippers on your boots and have someone walk with you.



## How does hormone therapy cause brittle bones?

Hormone therapy used to treat prostate cancer works by blocking testosterone, a male hormone. But, since testosterone helps keep bones strong, men using hormone therapy for their cancer may develop thin, brittle bones. It's hard to repair this bone damage and it can lead to broken bones. If you're using hormones for cancer therapy, take action!

- In your home:
  - Remove loose rugs and clutter on the floor.
  - Have a rail installed in your bathtub for extra support.
  - Hold onto stair rails when you go up and down stairs.
  - When you get up at night, turn on the lights!

Adopt health habits that help prevent osteoporosis.

- Increase weight-bearing exercise such as walking, dancing, lifting weights, or using a training machine. These exercises help to slow bone loss. Talk with your doctor or nurse before starting a new exercise program.

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- If you drink alcohol, stick to a limit of 2 drinks per day. Alcohol stops your body from absorbing calcium which your bones need to stay strong.
- Avoid cola and soft drinks. These may also lower bone strength.
- Avoid tobacco. It lowers your ability to develop new bone. If you use tobacco and need help to quit, ask your doctor or nurse.

Eat more calcium-rich foods and ask if you need to take a calcium tablet. Calcium is a mineral needed for strong bones. It's common in the foods listed below, but most adults don't get enough calcium just from food. Ask your doctor or nurse how much calcium you need each day and whether you need to take a calcium tablet. Ask what kind to take and whether you need a tablet that includes Vitamin D. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium.

## Foods that contain calcium

- Milk and milk products such as yogurt and cheese
- Beans
- Salmon
- Almonds and sesame seeds
- Certain fruits and vegetables such as oranges, figs, collard greens, spinach, rutabaga, broccoli, and kale
- Some drinks with added calcium such as orange juice and soy milk

If your doctor prescribes medication to treat osteoporosis, be sure to follow directions.

## Foods high in calcium:

Fruits and vegetables such as oranges, figs, spinach broccoli, collard greens, and kale



Milk and milk products (cheese, yogurt)



Also: Beans, almonds, sesame seeds, and some drinks with calcium added, such as orange juice, and soy milk



Common medicines to treat osteoporosis include these brand names:

- Fosamax
- Boniva
- Actonel

These are all in the same 'class' of medicine. Some are taken every day, some once a week, and some once a month. If you use one of them, follow the directions. They require that you:

1. Take them 30 to 60 minutes before your first meal of the day.
2. That you do not lie down for 30 to 60 minutes after you take them.

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## What questions should I ask my doctor or nurse?

Ask these questions:

- Do I need a bone density test?
- Should I do any exercises to help my bones?
- Do I need to take calcium tablets or other medicines for my bones?

If you have bone pain or break a bone, get medical help!



This information was developed in response to Michigan's Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, under guidance of the Prostate Cancer Action Committee. Their efforts were supported in part by the University of Michigan School of Nursing and the Michigan Department of Community Health with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cooperative Agreement 5U58DP000812. The contents of the publication do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

This fact sheet contains general information and is not meant to replace consultation with your doctor or nurse.

Developed September 2009.