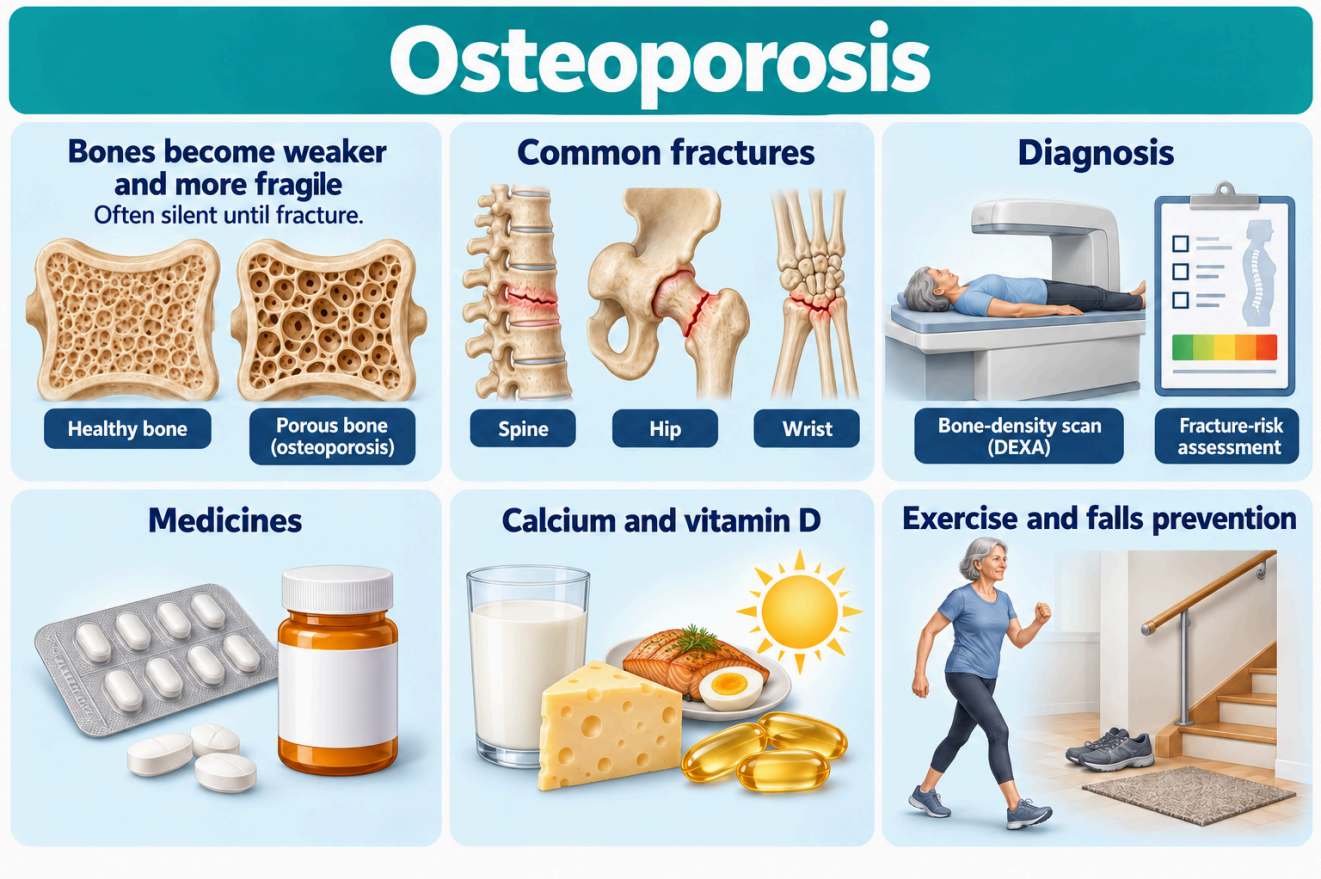
Osteoporosis

Understanding symptoms, treatment and living well

Osteoporosis

A guide to treatment, activity and self-management



Understanding osteoporosis

Osteoporosis weakens bones, making them thinner and more fragile. A bone may break after a minor fall or knock. It is often a “silent condition”, with no symptoms until a fracture occurs.

Supporting your wellbeing

Treatment, exercise and lifestyle changes can reduce fracture risk and help maintain quality of life. Physiotherapy can support safe strength, balance and movement.

Understanding your condition

Symptoms, contributing factors and practical information

Who is at risk?

- Risk increases with age and after menopause, but younger adults can also be affected.
- Secondary osteoporosis can result from medical conditions or medicines, including steroids.
- Other risks include family history, low body weight, smoking, excess alcohol and low activity.

Common fractures

The spine (vertebrae), hip and wrist are most commonly affected. Spinal fractures may cause height loss, back pain or a stooped posture.

What causes osteoporosis?

Bones naturally thin with age. Contributing factors include hormonal changes such as reduced oestrogen after menopause, too little calcium or vitamin D, reduced weight-bearing activity, certain medical conditions and long-term steroid use.

How is it diagnosed?

- DEXA scan to measure bone density
- Assessment of fracture risk
- Review of medical history and risk factors

Important information

Speak to your GP or healthcare professional after a fracture from a minor injury, for ongoing back pain or height loss, if you take long-term steroids, or for concerns about bone health.

Key message

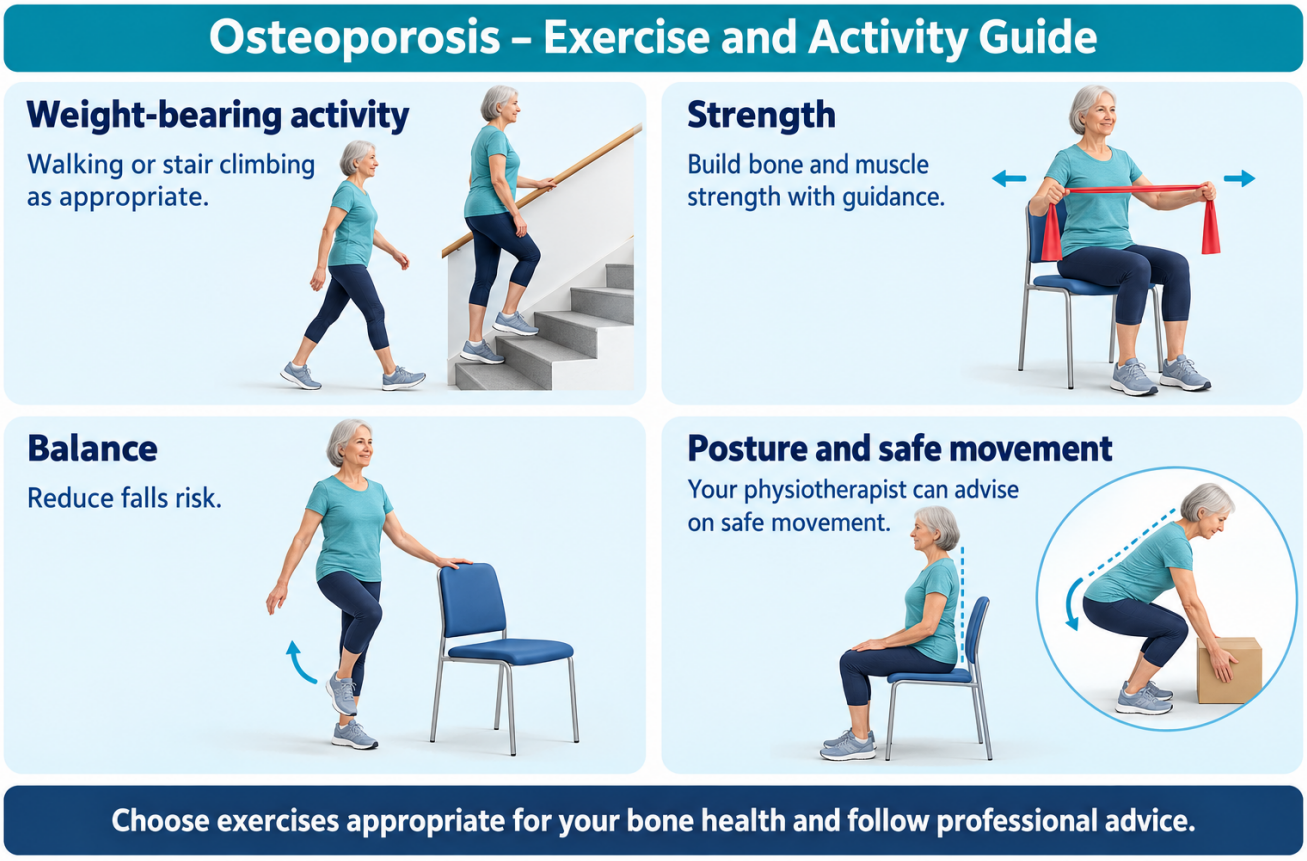
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Exercise and rehabilitation

Suitable activity under professional guidance

Exercise and activity examples

Weight-bearing activity, strength training and balance exercises can support bone and muscle strength and reduce falls risk. Ask your physiotherapist what is suitable for you.



Activity guidance

Weight-bearing: walking or stair climbing as appropriate.
Strength: build bone and muscle strength through a suitable programme.
Balance: improve steadiness and reduce falls risk.
Posture: improve spinal control and safe movement.

Exercise safely

Physiotherapy can guide safe strength and balance exercises, posture, movement and lifting. Follow professional advice for your bone health.

Management and next steps

Treatment, self-care and when to seek advice

Medication

Bone-strengthening medicines may be prescribed to slow bone loss and reduce fracture risk.

Calcium and vitamin D

Adequate calcium is essential. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. Supplements may be advised.

Lifestyle and falls prevention

- Stop smoking and limit alcohol
- Maintain a healthy diet and stay physically active
- Reduce falls risks at home
- Seek physiotherapy advice on posture, safe movement and lifting

When should I seek further help?

- A fracture after a minor injury
- Ongoing back pain or height loss
- Concern about bone health
- Long-term steroid medication use

Outlook and advice

Many people maintain good quality of life and reduce fracture risk with treatment, exercise and lifestyle changes. Speak to your GP, physiotherapist or specialist with concerns.

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