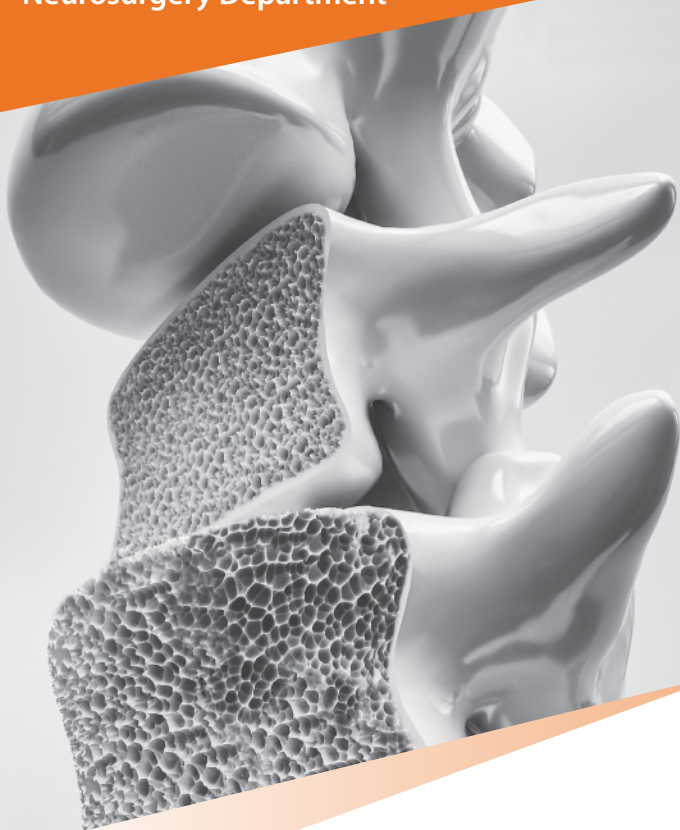


Neurosurgery Department



Osteoporotic Spine Fracture



National
Neuroscience Institute

SingHealth

Understanding Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a disorder resulting in lower bone density and strength. It mostly affects women aged 50 and above after menopause, those on long term steroids and those who drink excessively. Osteoporosis can lead to spine and hip fractures.

Symptoms of Osteoporotic Spine Fracture



- Back pain
- Hunched back
- Leg weakness and numbness
- Problems balancing or walking
- Inability to control bladder or bowels

Figure 1
Spine fracture as seen in a
CT scan

Diagnosing Osteoporosis

A bone mineral density (BMD) test is used to measure the mineral content of bones. It is a simple, painless and non-invasive test that takes less than 15 minutes. A blood test will also be done to measure calcium and vitamin D levels for deficiencies.

Diagnosing Osteoporotic Spine Fracture

Depending on your condition, the doctor will recommend an x-ray, Computed Tomography (CT) or a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan.

Treating Osteoporotic Spine Fracture

A team of medical professionals including doctors, nurses and allied health workers (physiotherapist, occupational therapist and orthotist) are involved in the treatment.

- Medications
 - Pain relievers to manage pain and allow one to regain movement faster
 - Calcium and vitamin D supplements to build bone strength
 - Medications to slow down and reverse bone loss
- Physiotherapy to strengthen core muscles and manage pain
- Braces to support the spine and prevent excessive curvature
- When the pain does not improve, bone cement may be injected into the fractured area in a procedure known as vertebroplasty
- Surgery is rarely needed unless the spinal cord is compressed or in very severe fractures

A fracture can recur within 1 to 2 years if osteoporosis is not treated, especially for those aged 60 and above or if there is a history of previous fractures.

Seek immediate medical help if you experience:

- Back pain after a fall
- Worsening back pain when there was no fall
- New and/or worsening of leg weakness and numbness
- New and/or worsening ability to control bladder and bowels

Living with Osteoporosis

Slow down bone degeneration with these tips:

- Take the daily recommended amount of calcium and vitamin D
- Exercise regularly to build strong bones
- Do strengthening and flexibility exercises for the neck and back muscles
- Avoid alcohol and smoking
- Reduce salt and caffeine intake
- Listen to your doctor and follow-up regularly to reduce risk of fractures

Support for Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis Society (Singapore) (OSS)

The OSS helps patients and the public learn about osteoporosis – causes, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management.

Visit www.osteoporosis.sg, contact +65 6346 4402 or email osteoporosis_society@themeetinglab.com for details.

WISHBONE – Women (And Men) in Support of Healthy Bones

An Osteoporosis Support Group at the Singapore General Hospital, WISHBONE is a platform for those who suffer from osteoporosis to share their stories and tips on living with osteoporosis.

For details, contact +65 6326 5837.

Contact Us

NNI@Changi General Hospital (CGH)

2 Simei Street 3, Singapore 529889

Email: appt_centre@cgh.com.sg

NNI@KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH)

100 Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 229899

Email: centralappt@kkh.com.sg

NNI@Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH)

90 Yishun Central, Singapore 768828

Email: ktph.appt@ktph.com.sg

NNI@Sengkang General Hospital (SKH)

110 Sengkang East Way, Singapore 544886

Email: appointments@skh.com.sg

NNI@Singapore General Hospital (SGH)

Outram Road, Singapore 169608

Email: appointments@sgh.com.sg

NNI@Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)

11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng, Singapore 308433

Email: appointments@nni.com.sg

NNI@Woodlands Health (WH)

17 Woodlands Drive 17, Singapore 737628

Email: appt@wh.com.sg

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