

What You Should Know About Hip Fractures

What is a hip fracture?

A hip fracture is a break in the top of your upper leg bone near the hip joint, just below the waist. The type of hip fracture depends on which part of the bone breaks. Most hip fractures are caused by a fall in people 65 years or older. People with weak bones, known as osteoporosis (OSS-tee-oh-puh-RO-sis), are more likely to break a hip.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is pain in the hip or groin area. The pain is usually worse when you try to move the hip. There is a lot of pain when you walk. Most people cannot walk with a hip fracture.

How is it found?

An x-ray can show if the hip is broken and which part of the bone is fractured. Sometimes, if the x-ray is normal, a test called an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is done to be sure there is no broken bone.

How is it treated?

The first step is to control the pain. An orthopedic surgeon will help you decide the next step. The most common treatment is

surgery. It may involve putting pins, rods, and plates into the hip joint. Some hip fractures are treated with a hip replacement. The orthopedic surgeon will help decide which surgery is best for you.

What happens next?

You will need to work with a physical therapist at home, in the therapist's office, or in a skilled nursing facility to regain use of your hip. You will practice bending, walking, and climbing stairs.

For most patients, your doctor will recommend a medicine called a bisphosphonate (bis-FOSS-fuh-nate). This is taken by mouth. It can help lower your chance of another hip fracture.

How can hip fractures be prevented?

You can prevent falls by talking to your doctor about a fall-risk assessment. You can learn how to make your home safer, talk about medicines that could be causing the falls, and work on your balance and strength.

Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/hip-fractures.html>



What You Should Know About Hip Fractures *(continued)*

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
<http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/index.cfm/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageAction=displayProduct&productID=677>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00392>

National Rehabilitation Information Center
<http://www.naric.com>

June 2014

Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2014 American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.