



iSalud SOL!

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Hispanic Community Health Study / Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL)

Falls and Fractures

The risk of falling and fall-related fractures increases with age. Some of the most common causes for falls are tripping or slipping due to loss of footing or traction, slow reflexes, reduced muscle strength, poor vision and impaired coordination due to medication or alcohol use. A fall can result in broken bones or head trauma. Some of the most frequent fractures among men and women over the age of 65 are a broken hip, pelvis, spine, arm, hand, or ankle. People older than 75 years are four to five times more likely to be admitted to a long-term care facility for a year or longer after a fall. Each year there are over 258,000 hip fractures in which 95% are caused by falls.

Another common reason for fractures is osteoporosis, known as the “silent” disease. Osteoporosis causes lowered bone mass, which can also lead to falls and fractures. Symptoms of osteoporosis can often go unnoticed until you actually suffer from a broken bone. Women are at a higher risk for osteoporosis because women tend to have smaller, thinner bones than men. Estrogen, a hormone in women that protects bones, decreases sharply when women reach menopause causing bone loss.

How to prevent a fall

You may be able to lower your risk of falling and fall-related fractures by taking care of your overall health. Here are a few tips that will help you avoid falls and broken bones:

- Use the right size cane or a safe walker if your walking is unsteady.
- Wear rubber-soled, non-stick, low-heeled shoes to prevent slipping.
- Be sure rugs have skid-proof backs or are tacked to the floor.
- Install grab bars on bathroom walls near tub, shower and toilet.
- Keep your telephone near your bed.
- Have your eyes and hearing tested annually.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Sources: The National Institutes of Health (NIH). Osteoporosis and Related Bone Disease National Resource Center.

National Institute on Aging (NIA) and National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIP).

How to keep your bones healthy

Having healthy bones can prevent fractures. Making some changes in your diet and lifestyle may improve your bone health. Here are some suggestions from the NIH’s Senior Health web page:

- Get more calcium through food sources such as dark green leafy vegetables, dairy products, nuts, sardines, salmon, and other foods enriched with calcium.
- Stay physically active. Regular exercise improves muscles and makes you stronger. It can also improve your flexibility.
- Quit smoking.

For more information visit:

http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/Osteoporosis/Fracture/prevent_falls.asp

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