

## **Signs of undiagnosed broken bones in a person's spine**

Many people think that as we age it is normal to lose height and your posture to change that this is "the normal aging process".

People can lose height due to wear and tear in the bones and discs in your spine. However, it is very important to have lose of height checked, to ensure it is not due to undiagnosed Osteoporosis.

Many people are not aware that 75% of people with broken bones in their spine do not have constant pain, they initially have pain, then most have intermittent back pain.

Anyone who has experienced any of the following should speak to their doctor regarding have a DXA scan done with an LVA. A DXA with an LVA (Lateral Vertebral Assessment) is a sideview DXA scan of the low, mid and upper back. Not all DXA clinics have the software to do LVA's.

- You have upper, middle or low back pain, intermittent or constant
- You have started to lose height (get shorter) – Are you unable to reach a shelf you used to be able to reach easily?
- Your head is starting to protrude forward from your body.
- Your shoulders have become rounded
- Has a hump started to develop on your back?
- Have you developed a pot belly?
- Has your body shaped changed? Your clothes do not fit the way they used too?

It is so important that everyone checks to see if they have risk factors for bone loss because Osteoporosis is a disease which is silent. It is called the "Silent Disease" because there are NO signs or symptoms that bone loss is occurring. A person can look perfectly healthy 10am and pick up a bag of groceries at 10.15am and break bones in their back.

It is very rare when a person with multiple broken bones in their back (fractures in their spine) cannot be helped. Usually, prevention of further broken bones from occurring is possible, but this all depends on multiple factors.

### **How much a person can improve their bone health usually depends on the following**

- How early the disease is diagnosed and treated
- The causes of why they have lost bone
- If the causes of their bone loss have been investigated and addressed
- If the person has taken the medication/treatment prescribed
- If the person has followed recommendations such as "Do not lift heavy items".

- If the person has continued or started an exercise programme that is not appropriate for those with bone loss. Example “Siting or standing and touching your toes”, seen in image below, as this can cause a broken bone in the spine for those with bone loss.



### The secondary effects of broken bones in the spine

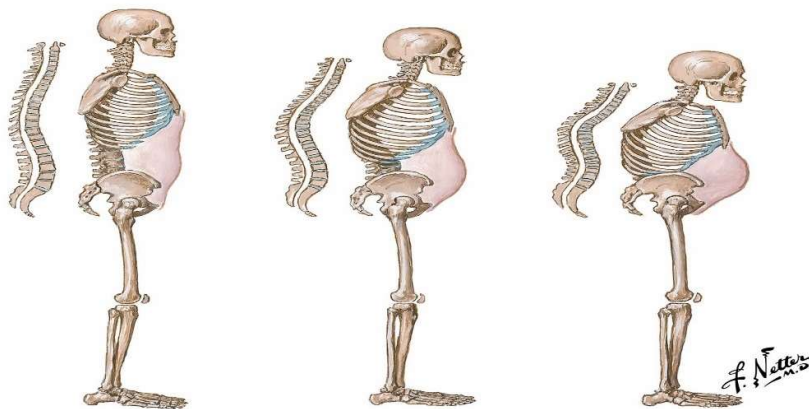
The secondary effects on the bones in the spine (vertebrae) of breaking bones in the spine are not reversible.

The image below shows what happens to people when fractures (broken bones) cause a Dowager’s hump to develop.

The person’s head protrudes forward from their body, which causes their centre of gravity to be off. This places the person at high risk of falling, which falls usually result in further broken bones (fractures).

The ribs drop down as there is not enough bone in the spine to keep the person upright, the stomach contents get pushed out and the rib cage ends up resting on the hips.

All of this occurring, makes a person’s body shape change, which can have a detrimental effect on the person’s self-image and quality of life.



The following are some of the many names for broken bones in the spine

- An Osteoporotic fracture
- A vertebral fracture
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### Types of vertebral fractures

**Normal**



**Biconcave**



**Wedge**



**Crush**



**Irish  
Osteoporosis  
Society**