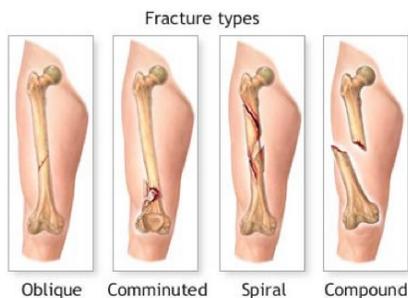


Jonathan Rosenfeld's Nursing Homes Abuse Blog

Determining The Type Of Fracture A Person Has Sustained Can Reveal If Nursing Home Abuse Is Responsible

Posted at 6:03 AM on July 16, 2010 by Jonathan Rosenfeld

As we age, our bones become weaker and are more susceptible to dangerous bone breaks. This is because older bones form small cracks more easily, which makes bone breaks more likely.



ADAM.

In order to prevent dangerous bone breaks-- and to help determine fractures that may be the result from situations involving [nursing home abuse](#)-- it is helpful to understand the types of fractures and what causes them. Common types of bone fractures include:

- Stress fracture
- Spontaneous fracture
- Compression fracture
- Traumatic fracture

Jonathan Rosenfeld represents victims of nursing home abuse and neglect throughout the country. For more information please visit Nursing Homes Abuse Blog (www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com), Bed Sore FAQ (www.bedsorefaq.com) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757.

Stress Fracture

Stress fractures are actually tiny cracks in bones caused by overuse and repetitive motion. They occur mostly commonly in the lower-legs and feet because these are weight-bearing bones. Stress fractures may be barely noticeable at first, but the swelling and pain will intensify as they worsen. Therefore, it is important to receive proper care and treatment to prevent the stress fracture from becoming more serious.

As with most bone breaks, osteoporosis or weak bones increases your chance of suffering from painful stress fractures. And, to further complicate matters, a study indicated that some post-menopausal women who take biophosphonate drugs such as Actonel, Boniva, Fosomax, and Reclast might actually have a higher risk for hip fractures. (See "[Study Links Commonly Prescribed Osteoporosis Drugs To An Increase in Hip Fractures](#)") It is important to discuss any new medications with your doctor, who will help you weigh the benefits and risks of drug treatment.

In a nursing home setting, staff members should be aware of the signs of stress fractures, so a resident's care plan can be altered to prevent further damage and alleviate pain. Signs and symptoms are swelling and pain, especially in the lower legs and feet. Nursing home staff or doctors use x-rays to diagnose stress fractures.

Early treatment of stress fractures is important, so the cracks do not worsen. Treatment includes reduced activity until the bone has a chance to heal. However, some stress fractures are harder to heal and are prone to re-injury. Therefore, it is important that nursing home staff monitor the resident's injury to ensure that proper healing occurs.

Spontaneous Fracture

[Spontaneous fractures](#) (also known as compression fractures) are bone breaks that occur without trauma in what seem like normal bones. The spine and hips (bones that directly support your weight) are the bones most likely to be affected by spontaneous fractures. Older bones are more vulnerable to compression fractures because they lack the internal support structures to withstand impacts and pressure. [Osteoporosis](#) (weak and brittle bones) is the most common cause of spontaneous fracture.

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A [10%](#) bone mass loss in the vertebrae can double the risk of vertebral fractures and a [10%](#) loss of bone mass can increase your risk of hip fracture (2.5 times greater chance of hip fracture). [Hip fractures](#) are one of the most common injuries for elderly people. They usually occur because of a fall and can cause serious and even life-threatening medical complications.

While walking exercises are often valuable tools to help maintain health (bone health) and promote strength, [strenuous walking exercises](#) can contribute to spontaneous hip fractures. Therefore, it is important to personalize individual walking plans for elderly residents according to their bone health, which can be determined by BMD (bone mineral density) tests.

Hip fractures usually require [surgery](#) to realign the bones, often with surgical screws, metal rods, or plates. Then, after surgery the main focus is on controlling pain and preventing infection. The best thing to do after hip surgery is to start moving around as soon as possible. This helps reduce recovery time and prevent dangerous complications such as blood clots, lung congestion, and pressure sores.

Oftentimes, a walking aid (walker, crutches, or cane) is used in the months following surgery. Physical therapy will help the resident regain their strength and independence. However, many elderly nursing home residents are never as independent as they were before their hip fracture. And, if the resident makes no improvements, physical therapy is often cut short.

Elderly persons can also suffer from compression fractures in their spine, which occur when the vertebrae (back bones) become so weak that they compress or collapse. Again, osteoporosis is the main cause of vertebral compression fractures. A compression fracture of the spine can cause severe pain and a stooped posture or even a [hunchback](#) (kyphosis). While this type of compression fracture will often heal on its own after 8-12 weeks, previous spinal compression fractures increase your chance of suffering from additional compression fractures of the spine.

Trauma Fracture

Elderly people are susceptible to dangerous falls because of poor balance and coordination, weakness, changes in gait, poor vision, illness, medications that cause sleepiness or dizziness. Over [11 million](#) people over the age of 65 suffer

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dangerous falls every year. That is an astonishing one out of every three senior citizens.

Your wrists and hips are the bones most likely to break if you suffer from a fall. Your wrists are susceptible to breaks from bracing yourself with your hands as you fall. And, your hips are more susceptible to breaks because as you age your bones (especially your hips) are less able to withstand impacts, and your hips often receive the brunt of the impact when you fall.

After an accident or fall, nursing home staff members will examine the injured area to look for bone breaks, cuts, bruising, or other signs of injury. The staff will ask questions and investigate how the injury occurred. This investigation into the cause of the fall is very important to protect the resident and prevent future falls.

If the resident lost consciousness, this could be a sign of a more serious condition, such as a stroke or heart attack. In the case of a possible bone break, the resident will be treated by a physician who will determine whether x-rays are necessary. The doctor will use a splint or case to immobilize bone breaks that occur on the arms, legs, hands, and feet. However, as discussed above, hip fractures usually require surgery and post-operative physical therapy to help improve mobility.

Understanding the significance of each type of fracture

Understanding the different types of bone fractures can help prevent dangerous bone breaks by avoiding dangerous situations and taking preventative measures. Nursing home facilities are required to keep the facility free from accident hazards and take preventive measures to prevent dangerous falls.

Each resident should have an individual care plan specifically tailored to their strengths and weaknesses in order to provide the best care possible. If you or a loved one suffered a dangerous bone break while a resident at a nursing home facility, you may be entitled to compensation.

Sources:

[Nursing Homes Abuse Blog: Study Links Commonly Prescribed Osteoporosis Drugs to an Increase in Hip Fractures](#)

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[Merck: Fractures](#)

[Amherst Bulletin: When Seniors Fall, Perilous but Preventable](#)

[e-Medicine: Lumbar Compression Fracture](#)

[Mayo Clinic: Stress Fractures](#)

[Journal of Orthopedic Surgery: Strenuous walking exercise and spontaneous fracture of the femoral neck in the elderly](#)

[Medicine Net: Fracture](#)

[WebMD: Understanding Fractures](#)

[Pub Med: Spontaneous fracture – multiple causes](#)

Strellis & Field, Chartered

Chicago Office

444 N. Wells St., Ste 202
Chicago, IL 60610
Tel: 312.201.0000

Belleville Office

216 W. Washington Street
Belleville, IL 62226
Tel: 618.235.8701

Waterloo Office

115 East Mill Street
Waterloo, IL 62298
Tel: 618.939.3402

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