

Preventing Vertebral Compression Fractures

Introduction

For children and adults with OI the spine is particularly vulnerable to injury. Some activities such as contact sports obviously increase the risk of fracture. Other activities that may not seem to be dangerous may pose a “hidden” threat. The most common injury is a vertebral compression fracture. This occurs when an injury causes the spinal bone or vertebra to fracture and collapse (compress). This type of fracture can be painful when it happens, but can also cause ongoing back pain.

How can I protect my spine?

Learn good techniques for standing, sitting, lifting and even doing ordinary activities such as housework, or gardening. These techniques are the same as for adults who have osteoporosis. Avoid activities that are likely to cause injury.

What kinds of activities should be avoided?

Avoid anything that jars, twists or puts pressure on the spine. This includes (but is not limited to) heavy lifting, jumping, diving, riding horses, all-terrain vehicles, or motorcycles and most amusement park rides. People with weak spines should also avoid sliding down a slide, jumping from a swing and sledding.

What can school children do to keep their spines healthy?

It is important to wear seatbelts in cars and avoid sitting at the back of the school bus where the ride is the most bouncy. When possible, keep a second set of textbooks at home to avoid carrying heavy book bags back and forth to school.

What else can be done to protect the spine?

Exercise is important. Swimming is an excellent activity that provides joint motion without stress and is good for the heart and lungs. Walking is also beneficial for many people. Talk to your doctor and physical therapist about what other recreational activities would suit your interests and abilities.

Anyone who sits a lot either in a desk chair or in a wheelchair needs to change position often. It helps to get out of the chair and either lie down or stand for a portion of the day.

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