FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Osteoporosis Awareness in Care Settings

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 061

Version 1.0 - **First Published**: August 2026

www.flexilearnhub.com

Part of the FlexiLearnHub Professional Knowledge Library

Introduction

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become weaker and more fragile, increasing the risk of fractures. It develops gradually and often causes no obvious symptoms until a bone breaks, which is why osteoporosis is sometimes described as a **“silent” condition**.

Although osteoporosis can affect anyone, it is more common in older adults. Fractures associated with osteoporosis frequently affect the **hip, wrist and bones of the spine** and may have a significant impact on mobility, independence and quality of life.

Care staff play an important role in supporting individuals living with osteoporosis by promoting safe mobility, helping reduce avoidable falls risks, following moving and handling guidance and recognising pain or changes that could indicate an injury or fracture.

Why This Resource Matters

Understanding osteoporosis awareness helps care staff to:

- Understand how osteoporosis affects bone strength.
- Recognise that an individual may have osteoporosis without obvious symptoms.
- Understand why falls and relatively minor injuries may result in fractures.
- Support safe mobility and appropriate falls-prevention measures.
- Follow individual moving and handling guidance carefully.
- Encourage independence while helping reduce avoidable risks.
- Recognise pain, reduced mobility or other changes that may indicate an injury.
- Report concerns promptly and seek appropriate assistance.
- Provide safe, compassionate and person-centred support.

Key Message

Osteoporosis can make bones more vulnerable to fracture, so **prevention and early recognition of injury are particularly important**.

By supporting safe mobility, following falls-prevention and moving and handling guidance, and responding promptly to unexplained pain or changes in mobility, care staff can help protect individuals while maintaining their independence, dignity and confidence.

Understanding Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis develops when bones lose strength and become more fragile. Healthy bone is continually renewed throughout life, but as people age, bone loss can occur faster than new bone is formed. Over time, this can reduce bone strength and increase the likelihood of fractures.

Some individuals are at greater risk because of factors such as increasing age, family history, certain medical conditions, long-term use of some medicines, low body weight, reduced physical activity or previous fractures.

Osteoporosis itself may not cause pain until a fracture occurs. This makes awareness of **falls prevention, safe mobility and changes in an individual's condition** particularly important.

Common Fractures and Possible Signs

Osteoporosis-related fractures commonly affect the **hips, wrists and spine**.

Possible signs of an injury or fracture may include:

- New or sudden pain following a fall or minor injury.
- Difficulty standing, walking or bearing weight.
- Swelling, bruising or tenderness.
- Reduced movement or reluctance to use a limb.
- A limb appearing shortened, unusually positioned or deformed.
- New or unexplained back pain.
- A sudden reduction in mobility or ability to complete everyday activities.

Not every fracture will be immediately obvious. Care staff should take reports of new pain seriously and report concerns promptly.

Helping to Reduce Fracture Risk

Care staff can support individuals living with osteoporosis by:

- Following the individual's falls-prevention and mobility plans.
- Keeping frequently used areas free from avoidable trip hazards.
- Ensuring prescribed walking aids are available and used correctly.
- Following moving and handling guidance carefully.
- Encouraging appropriate physical activity in accordance with the individual's care plan.
- Supporting good nutrition and hydration.
- Encouraging prescribed treatment and supplements only within the limits of the care worker's authorised role.
- Ensuring suitable footwear is worn where appropriate.
- Reporting changes in balance, mobility, pain or confidence promptly.

Remember

A fall that appears relatively minor can cause a significant fracture in someone with osteoporosis.

If an individual experiences **new pain, difficulty moving or a significant change in mobility following a fall or injury**, do not simply encourage them to get up and continue as normal. Follow organisational procedures, avoid unnecessary movement where a significant injury is suspected, and obtain appropriate medical assessment.

Safe support should protect the individual while preserving as much independence and confidence as possible.

Professional Responsibilities

Care staff have an important role in helping individuals living with osteoporosis remain safe, mobile and as independent as possible. Because weakened bones can fracture following relatively minor falls or injuries, staff should follow individual risk assessments, mobility plans and moving and handling guidance carefully.

As a care professional, you should always:

- Treat the individual with dignity, patience and respect.
- Follow the individual's care plan, risk assessments and falls-prevention measures.
- Follow agreed moving and handling procedures and use prescribed equipment correctly.
- Encourage safe mobility and independence without exposing the individual to unnecessary risk.
- Ensure prescribed walking aids are available and used appropriately.
- Help maintain a safe environment by identifying and reporting potential falls hazards.
- Observe for new pain, swelling, bruising or changes in mobility.
- Take reports of pain seriously, particularly following a fall or injury.
- Support prescribed medication or supplements only when trained, competent and authorised.
- Record relevant observations and incidents accurately.
- Report concerns promptly and seek appropriate medical assistance when required.

When to Raise Concerns

Report concerns promptly if:

- The individual experiences a fall, particularly if they develop pain afterwards.
- There is new or unexplained pain in the hip, wrist, back or another area.
- The individual suddenly has difficulty standing, walking or bearing weight.
- A limb appears unusually positioned, shortened or deformed.
- There is significant swelling, bruising or tenderness following an injury.
- The individual experiences sudden or severe back pain.
- There is a noticeable deterioration in mobility or balance.
- The individual becomes reluctant to move because of pain.
- You suspect that a fracture or other significant injury may have occurred.

If a serious fracture is suspected, **avoid unnecessary movement**, follow organisational emergency procedures and obtain appropriate medical assistance.

Supporting Falls Prevention

Reducing falls risk is particularly important for individuals with osteoporosis. Everyday good practice may include:

- Keeping floors and walking areas free from avoidable hazards.
- Ensuring appropriate lighting is available.
- Making sure frequently used items are within safe reach.
- Encouraging the correct use of prescribed mobility aids.
- Supporting suitable footwear where appropriate.
- Following individual toileting and mobility arrangements.
- Reporting changes in balance, strength or confidence.
- Encouraging appropriate activity in accordance with the individual's care plan.

Falls cannot always be prevented, but recognising and reducing avoidable risks can help protect individuals from injury.

Good Practice Reminder

Osteoporosis may not be visible, but the consequences of a fracture can be significant.

By supporting **safe mobility, effective falls prevention and careful moving and handling**, and by responding promptly to pain or changes following an injury, care staff can help reduce the risk of harm while promoting independence, dignity and quality of life.

Summary

Osteoporosis is a condition that weakens bones and increases the risk of fractures. Because it may develop without obvious symptoms, an individual may not know they have weakened bones until a fracture occurs.

Care staff play an important role in supporting individuals living with osteoporosis by promoting safe mobility, reducing avoidable falls risks, following moving and handling guidance and recognising signs that could indicate an injury. Prompt reporting and appropriate medical assessment following a suspected fracture can help reduce the risk of further harm.

Osteoporosis Awareness Checklist

✓ Follow the individual's care plan, risk assessments and mobility guidance.

✓ Support safe mobility and independence wherever possible.

✓ Help identify and reduce avoidable falls hazards.

✓ Ensure prescribed mobility aids are available and used correctly.

✓ Follow moving and handling procedures carefully.

✓ Take new or unexplained pain seriously, particularly following a fall.

✓ Observe for swelling, bruising, tenderness or changes in mobility.

✓ Avoid unnecessary movement if a significant fracture is suspected.

✓ Record falls, injuries and relevant observations accurately.

✓ Report concerns promptly and seek appropriate medical assistance when required.

Further Information

For further guidance on osteoporosis and bone health, visit:

NHS – Osteoporosis
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis/

Royal Osteoporosis Society
https://theros.org.uk/

NICE – Osteoporosis and Fragility Fractures
https://www.nice.org.uk

Care Quality Commission (CQC)
https://www.cqc.org.uk

Continue Your Learning with FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub
https://flexilearnhub.com/knowledge-hub/

Professional Online Courses
https://flexilearnhub.com/courses/

Related Knowledge Hub Resources

- Resource 014 – Preventing Falls in Care Settings
- Resource 018 – Supporting Independence in Care Settings
- Resource 022 – Recognising and Responding to Pain in Care Settings
- Resource 034 – Recognising Deterioration in Care Settings
- Resource 049 – Frailty Awareness
- Resource 060 – Arthritis Awareness in Care Settings

Related FlexiLearnHub Courses

- Moving & Handling Awareness
- Person-Centred Care Awareness
- Nutrition & Hydration Awareness
- Medication Awareness

Copy Right & Disclaimer

© 2026 FlexiLearnHub. All rights reserved.

https://flexilearnhub.com

This resource has been produced by FlexiLearnHub to support awareness and continuing professional development within the health and social care sector. It is intended for educational purposes only and should not replace formal training, professional judgement, organisational policies or current UK legislation. Care staff should always follow their employer's procedures and seek advice from a senior colleague or appropriate healthcare professional where necessary.

This resource may be downloaded, printed and shared in its full original, unaltered format for personal, educational and workplace training purposes. It must not be modified, reproduced for commercial gain, sold or republished without prior written permission of FlexiLearnHub.

Information contained within this guide is intended for general awareness only and should always be used alongside current legislation, organisational policies, professional guidance and individual care plans where applicable.