



Special Feature

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Cracks and cures: Preventing and treating fractures

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – Bones, the guardians of our vital organs, are remarkably resilient — but they are not invincible. Even the sturdiest of bones can succumb to fractures. It’s important to know the signs of fractures to keep your bones healthy.

Signs a bone may be broken

While some fractures are obvious, the symptoms of a stress fracture or cracked bone can be subtle. Swelling, tenderness, bruising or discoloration may indicate an underlying issue.

“Any limb that appears out of place or experiences persistent discomfort requires attention,” said Dr. Kaare Kolstad, orthopedic surgeon at Columbus Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Clinic. “Ignoring these signs may lead to complications in the long run.”

Types of fractures

Bone fractures come in various forms — each presenting unique challenges for diagnosis and treatment:

- **Stable fracture:** The broken pieces align neatly, allowing for a straightforward healing process.
- **Open fracture:** The bone pierces through the skin during the fracture, increasing the risk of infection.
- **Transverse fracture:** This fracture is characterized by a horizontal break, often resulting from a direct blow.
- **Oblique fracture:** The break occurs at an angle, complicating the alignment of the bone.
- **Comminuted fracture:** The bone shatters into multiple pieces, demanding careful reconstruction.

It’s important that you undergo a comprehensive evaluation and understand the type of fracture to determine the best course of action. Treatment may involve casting, surgery or a combination of both, depending on the nature and severity of the fracture.

When to seek care

If you fall or have another injury that causes pain, seek medical attention immediately. But even if you don’t remember hurting yourself, see a doctor if you have swelling, tenderness or something that doesn’t look right. It could be a fracture.

“Fractures may not always be immediately apparent, and delaying medical evaluation can impede the healing process,” said Kolstad. “Early detection is key.”



After you have been treated, remember that a fracture takes time to fully heal. It will stop hurting before it's strong enough to support your normal activities. If your doctor gives you a cast or splint, keep using it until a medical evaluation determines you are healed. If you do have a cast, call your doctor if you notice any cracks or soft spots.

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