



TREATING PAIN,  
IT'S VITAL

# PAINFREE

[www.painfreeinitiative.org](http://www.painfreeinitiative.org)

initiative

Rapid detection of pain and its immediate management improves the well-being of patients, reduces the risk of complications and facilitates the return to mobility and independence.



# You have broken a bone. Are you experiencing pain?

**This booklet contains important information to help you and your family once you leave the Emergency Department.**

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## **IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ**



**Information provided by this booklet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional health care practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified health care practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.**

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**Office d'éducation des patients  
Patient Education Office**



This material is also available on the  
and the MUHC Patient Education Office:  
[muhcpatienteducation.ca](http://muhcpatienteducation.ca)

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# Why is it important for me to treat my pain?

Untreated pain can put you at risk for depression, anxiety, unnecessary suffering and an overall diminished quality of life. Treating your pain early can help improve your well-being.



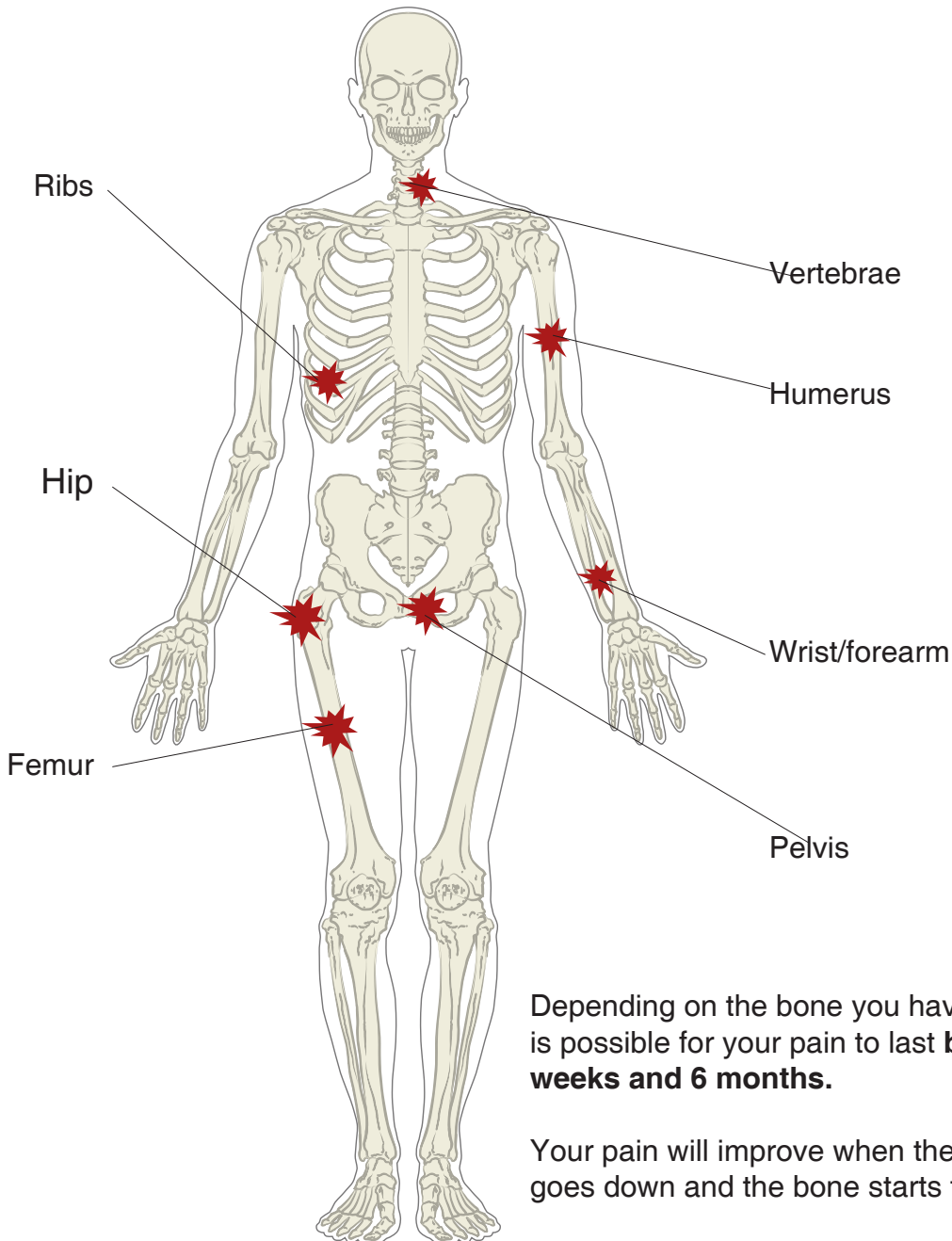
Treating your pain will help you:

- Move and breathe more easily
- Eat and sleep better
- Return to your independence

The faster you recover, the sooner you can get back to your regular everyday activities!

# How long can I expect my pain to last?

There are different bones that can be broken.



Depending on the bone you have broken, it is possible for your pain to last **between 6 weeks and 6 months**.

Your pain will improve when the swelling goes down and the bone starts to heal.

# What pain medication have I been prescribed?

Doctors prescribe different medications for different levels of pain:

## 1. Acetaminophen:

- For mild pain
- Examples: Tylenol®, Atasol®



## 2. Opioids:

- A stronger medication for moderate to severe pain
- Examples: hydromorphone, oxycodone, codeine and morphine.

# Will I become addicted to my pain medication?

Many people believe that if they take opioids for pain they will develop an addiction similar to drug addicts.

Addiction to pain medication is very rare when taken only:

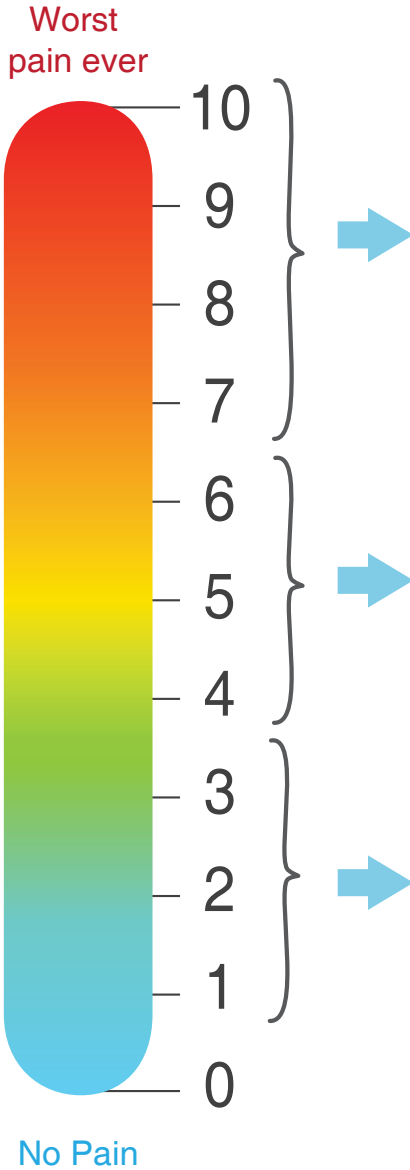
- 1) as prescribed by a doctor
- 2) for a short period of time

Therefore it is very unlikely that you will become addicted to your pain medication if you follow this advice.

**Use opioids carefully. They are intended only for moderate to severe pain and only when prescribed by a doctor.**



# How can I assess my pain level?



**For Severe Pain (7~10), take:**



Acetaminophen regularly every 6 hours in combination with opioids regularly every 4 hours.

**For Moderate Pain (4~6), take:**



Acetaminophen regularly every 6 hours in combination with opioids regularly every 6 hours.

**For Mild Pain (1~3), take:**



Acetaminophen regularly every 6 hours

**Do not wait until your pain is severe to take your medications. It is easier to treat mild to moderate pain.**



# Can I expect any side effects from my pain medication?

You may experience side effects if you are taking an opioid to help control your pain. Here is a list of the most common side effects of opioids and suggestions of what you can do to manage each one:



- 1. Drowsiness:** you may feel sleepy
- Relax, take a nap
  - Do not drive or do anything that requires a lot of concentration



- 2. Dizziness:** you may feel that your head is spinning
- Try to move slowly to avoid falling
  - Ask someone to stay with you



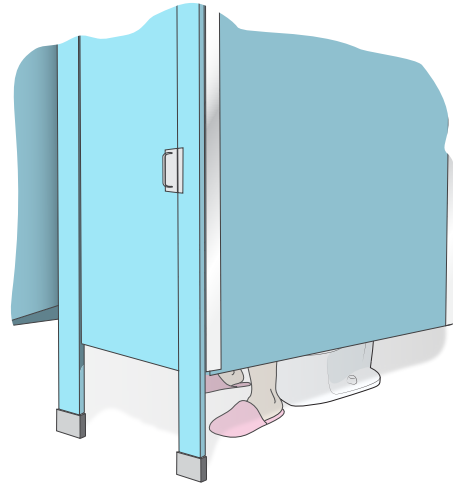
- 3. Nausea:** you may feel sick to your stomach and/or vomit
- Try reducing the amount of pain medication you are taking
  - Notify your doctor to see if a medication against nausea should be prescribed (if the symptoms persist)



- 4. Dry mouth:** you may not have enough saliva
- Drink water or suck on an ice cube



- 6. Skin rash:** your skin may be red or itchy
- Take oatmeal baths or use calamine lotion
  - Talk to your doctor if it does not go away



- 5. Constipation:** you may have difficulty moving your bowels
- Drink a lot of water (8 to 10 glasses per day) and prune juice
  - Take a medication for constipation regularly. If you don't already have one prescribed, you can ask your pharmacist or physician to recommend one.

**If you are experiencing the following symptoms:**

- Swelling in the face (eyes, mouth)
- Tightness in the throat
- Difficulty breathing

**You may be having an allergic reaction to your pain medication. If so, stop taking your medication and call 911.**



# Pain Diary

You may find it useful to track your pain intensity by using the pain diary below:

Date	Time	Where does it hurt?	Pain Intensity (0 to 10)	What were you doing?	Did you take any medication? (yes/no)	Pain after 1-2 hours of taking medication (0 to 10)	Comments? / Side Effects?

# What should I do if I have a cast?

## If you have a cast, you should:

Keep your cast dry so it does not lose its shape or fall apart.

- If you take a bath or shower, make sure to keep it out of the water.
- You may wrap it with plastic bags and tape the opening so water does not get in.
- Never immerse it in water.
- If it gets a bit wet by accident, use a hairdryer set on “cool” (never “hot”) to help it dry.



Elevate the cast on pillows above the level of your heart, for 30 minutes, 3 times a day. It will help decrease the swelling.

Move your fingers or toes to keep the blood circulation going.

Protect the cast and your exposed fingers or toes if you go out in the rain, snow or in cold weather.

If the skin under the cast gets itchy:

- Do not put lotion or powder.
- Do not scratch underneath the cast.
- You can try blowing cool air (never hot) with a hairdryer inside the cast.
- Do not try to remove, cut or trim the cast.
- Put tape at the ends if it is rubbing on your skin.

# What else can I do to help reduce my pain?

To help reduce your pain, you can:

- Use cool cloths or ice to soothe your muscle pain.
- Position yourself carefully with pillows and soft cushions.
- Breathe slowly and quietly to relax your mind and body.
- Engage in pleasant distractions such as:
  - singing, meditating, reading, listening to music, watching television, computer activities, visiting and talking with friends or family.



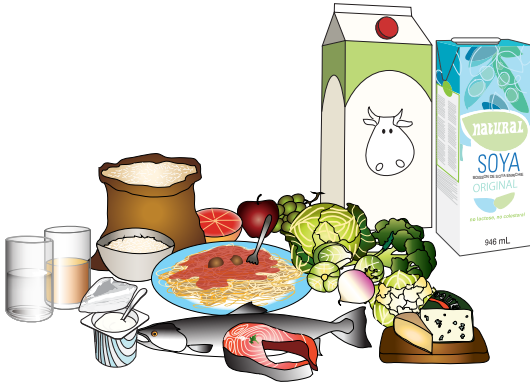
**You should come back to the Emergency Department if:**

- You have pain or swelling that is not relieved by elevating the cast above the level of your heart.
- The toes or fingers below your cast become bluish, pale, cold or feel numb and tingly.
- The cast is broken or cracked.



# What can I do to speed up my recovery?

To speed up your recovery, you can:



Follow a balanced diet and drink regularly.



Participate in physiotherapy and exercises as prescribed by your healthcare team.



Make sure to get enough sleep.  
Take naps when you are tired.



Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor.

**If your pain is not going away, speak to your caregiver or a member of your healthcare team.**



# What can I do to prevent another fall?

To prevent another fall, you can:

## Exercise regularly

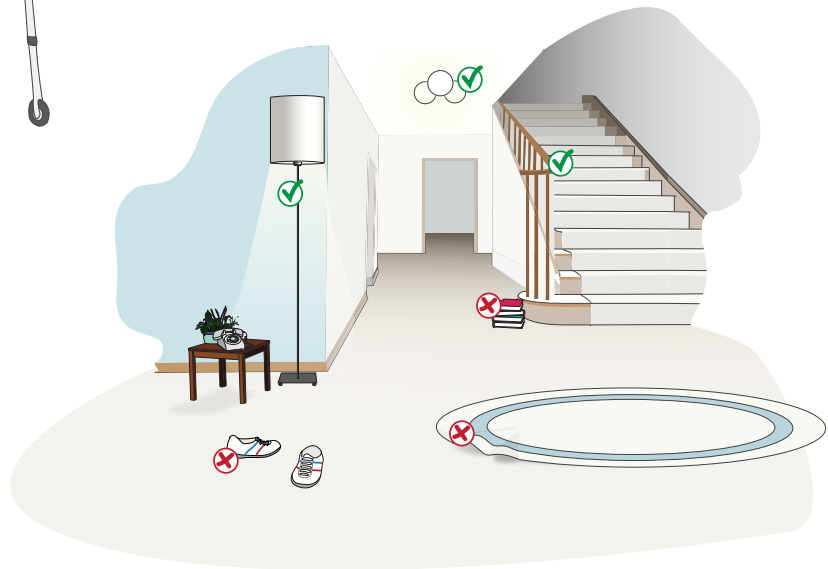
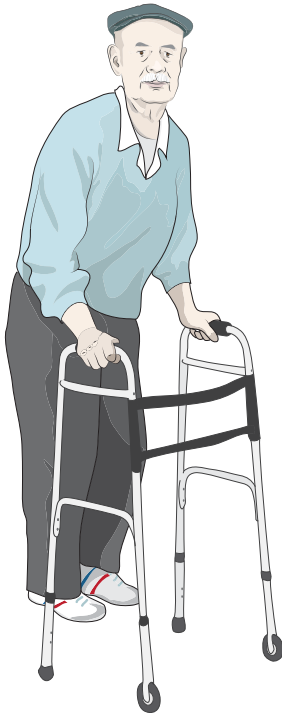
- Engage in group or home-based exercises to maintain and improve muscle strength

## Use mobility aids

- For example, a cane or a walker

## Wear proper footwear

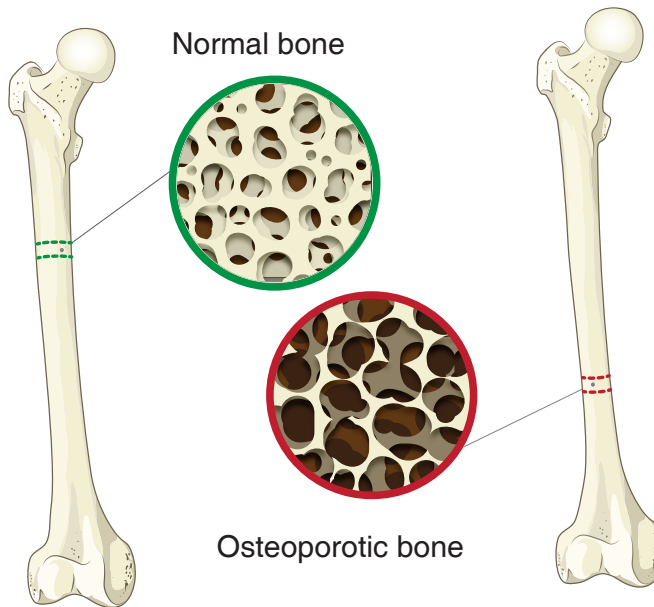
- For example, shoes with a gripping sole



## Make your home safe

- Use rubber mats and grab bars in your bath or shower
- Reduce clutter on the floor, such as loose rugs
- Use solid handrails on all stairways
- Ensure proper lighting throughout your home

# What is Osteoporosis?



**Osteoporosis is a bone disease that:**

- makes bones more fragile
- increases your risk of breaking a bone
- has no visible symptoms

**A broken bone may be your first and only sign of osteoporosis.**

Without proper treatment, individuals with osteoporosis are at risk of breaking more bones.

**To find out if you have osteoporosis, tell your family doctor about:**

- Any bones you have broken as an adult
- Any loss of height
- Any previous falls

**Ask your family doctor for:**

- a fracture risk assessment
- a bone density test (a simple, painless x-ray)

**For more information, contact Osteoporosis Canada at:**  
1-800-463-6842 or visit [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)

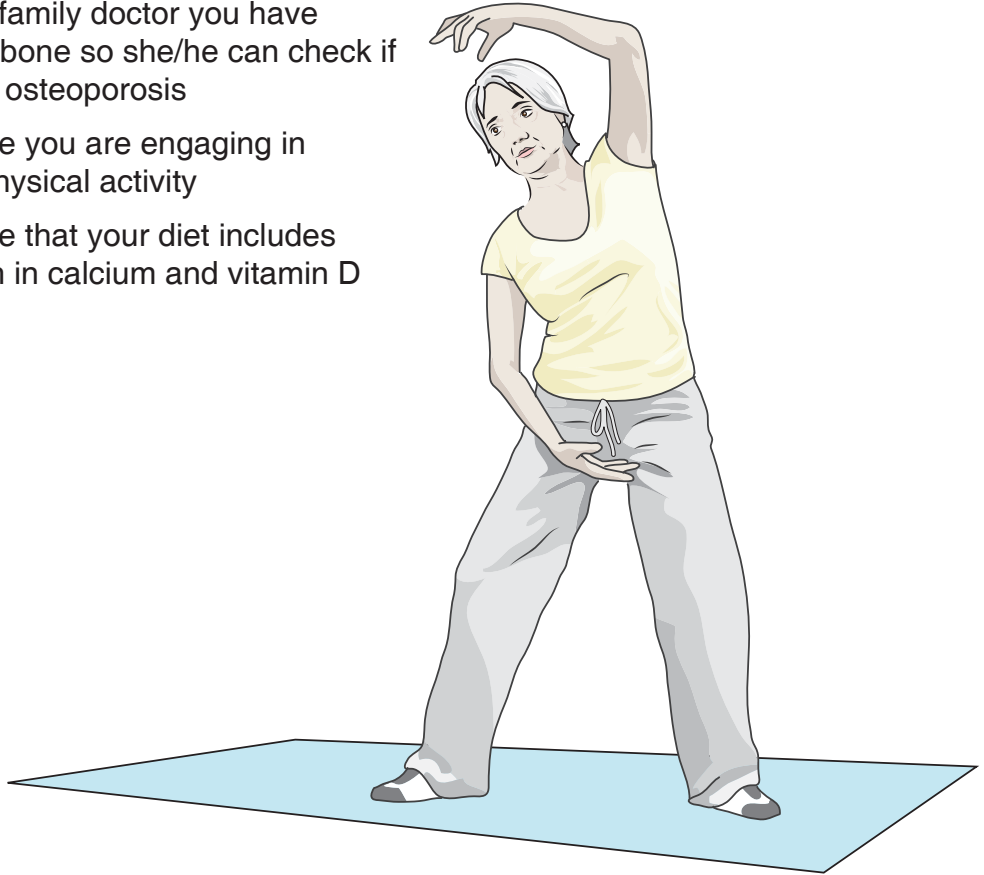
Taken from: *Osteoporosis Canada (2011). Make your FIRST break your LAST: Insist on assessment [Brochure].*



# What can I do to prevent breaking another bone?

To prevent breaking another bone, you should:

- Tell your family doctor you have broken a bone so she/he can check if you have osteoporosis
- Make sure you are engaging in regular physical activity
- Make sure that your diet includes foods rich in calcium and vitamin D

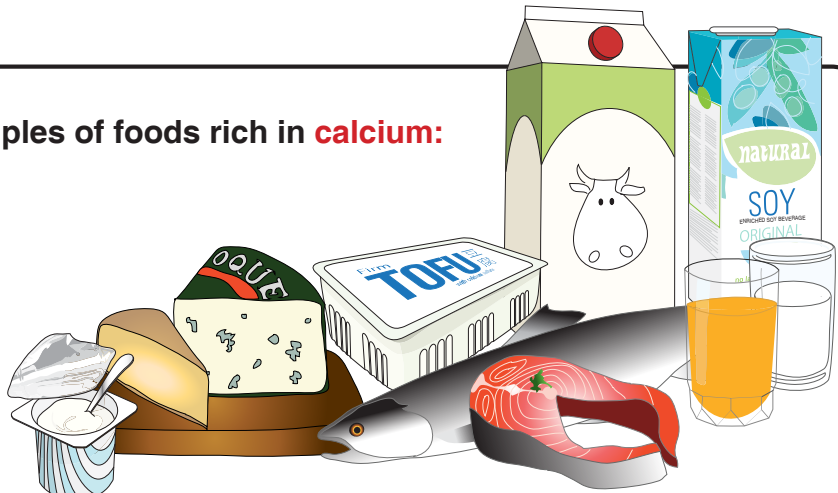


Osteoporosis Canada recommends a total of **1200 mg of calcium** and **800 international units (IU) of vitamin D** per day through diet and supplements.



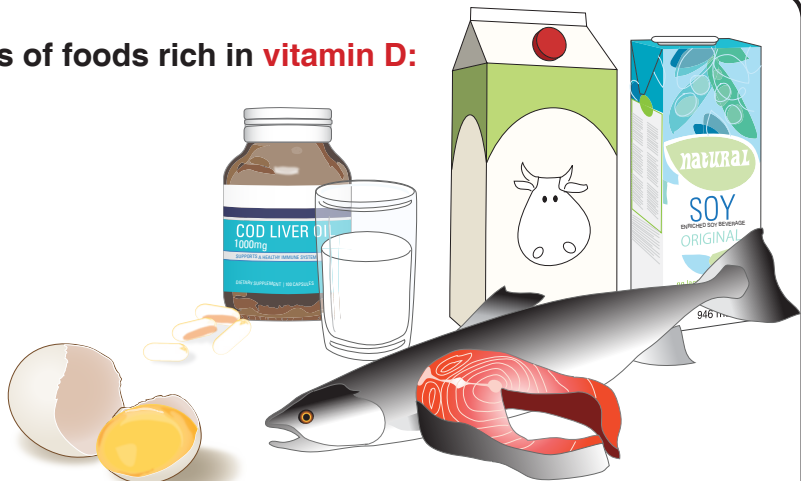
Here are examples of foods rich in **calcium**:

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Salmon with bones
- Soy beverages and orange juice fortified with calcium
- Firm tofu made with calcium sulfate



Here are examples of foods rich in **vitamin D**:

- Milk
- Egg yolks
- Fish liver oils
- Fortified soy beverages
- Oily or fatty fish, such as salmon



Vitamin D is not found naturally in many foods, therefore it is likely that you will need to take supplements to meet your daily requirements. Talk to your family doctor to find out if you should be taking a supplement.



# What appointments should I make after leaving the Emergency Department?

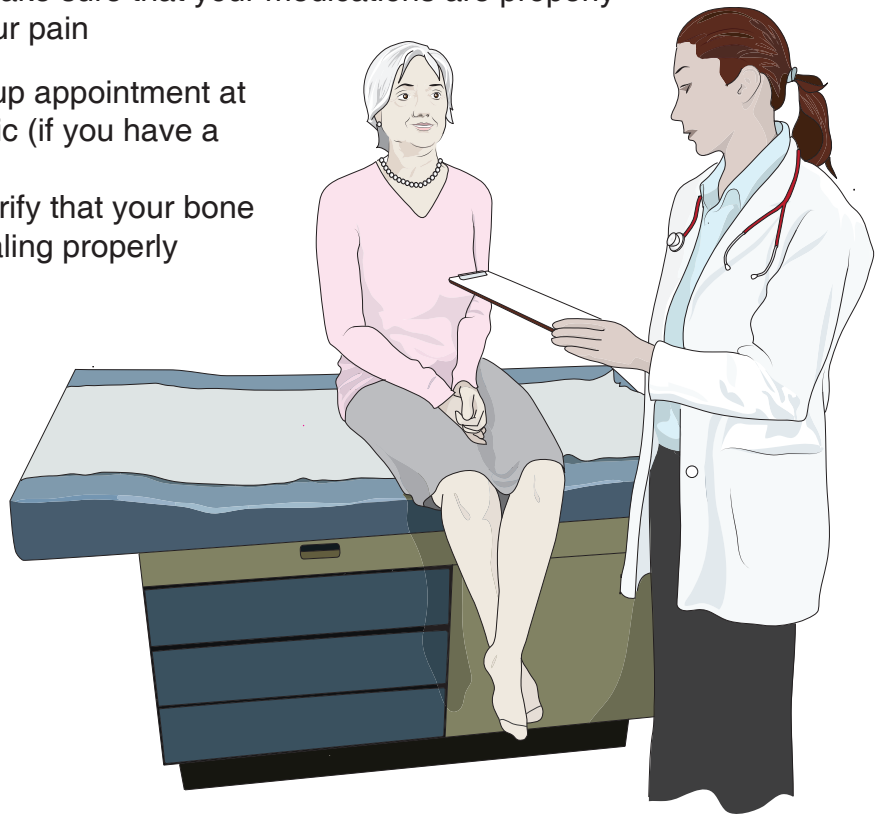
**After leaving the Emergency Department, you should:**

Schedule a check-up appointment with your family doctor

- It is important that she/he know about your bone fracture
- She/he can check if you have osteoporosis to help you avoid breaking another bone
- She/he can make sure that your medications are properly controlling your pain

Schedule a follow-up appointment at the Orthopedic clinic (if you have a referral)

- She/he will verify that your bone fracture is healing properly



**If you do not have a family doctor, contact your local CLSC. They can help you find a family doctor.**



# Who should I contact in case I have questions and/or concerns?

If you have questions and/or concerns, you should contact:

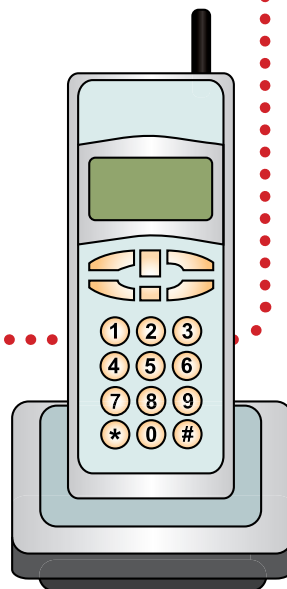
**Your family doctor**

**Your local CLSC**

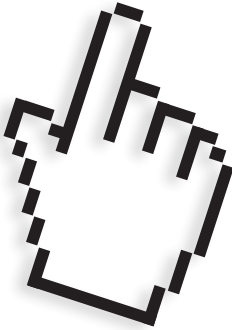
For a list of Montreal locations:

[www.santemontreal.qc.ca](http://www.santemontreal.qc.ca)

**Info-santé: 8-1-1**



# Other sites and resources



**Not all information found on the Internet is accurate or reliable.**

If you would like more information on topics covered in this booklet, you can visit these reliable websites.

PAINFREE website: [www.painfreeinitiative.org](http://www.painfreeinitiative.org)

**For information on general health:**

Health Canada: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors](http://www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors)

**For information on bone health:**

Osteoporosis Canada: [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)

Dairy Farmers of Canada: [www.dairyfarmers.ca](http://www.dairyfarmers.ca)

**For information on pain management:**

Canadian Pain Society: [www.canadianpainsociety.ca](http://www.canadianpainsociety.ca)

Canadian Pain Coalition: [www.canadianpaincoalition.ca](http://www.canadianpaincoalition.ca)

Quebec Association for Chronic Pain: [www.douleurchronique.org](http://www.douleurchronique.org)

**Patient Education Office ER Teaching sheets**

[www.muhcpatienteducation.ca](http://www.muhcpatienteducation.ca)





# PAINFREE

is an initiative of the MUHC

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In Collaboration with

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***CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal***  
***CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal***  
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