Caring for Your Child  
Fragile Bones

What Are Fragile Bones?

Fragile bones are bones that have a greater risk for breaking (fracturing) than normal bones.

How do I know if my child’s bones are fragile?

We start by looking at three things:

- **Strength**: How much weight a bone can hold
- **Brittleness**: How much bending a bone can tolerate
- **Function**: How much work a bone can do before it fractures

Your child’s doctor may order tests to get more information about his bone health.

What causes fragile bones?

Many things can place a child at risk for having fragile bones:

- Bone diseases such as osteogenesis imperfecta, rickets, and bone disease of prematurity
- Cerebral palsy, spina bifida
- Chronic kidney disease (especially if it requires dialysis)
- Chronic GI diseases, such as Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis
- Eating disorders
- Sickle cell disease, thalassemia
- Juvenile idiopathic arthritis, connective tissue disease
- Organ transplant

Some medications can also place a child at risk for fragile bones:

- Long-term steroid use
- Anti-seizure medications
- Long-term heparin use
- Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN)

Not being able to move on his own and previous fractures can cause a child’s bones to be fragile.
How Can I Prevent Injury To My Child?

- Maintain your child’s natural body position.
- Handle your child gently with slow, careful movements.
- Do not pull or twist limbs.
- Do not bend or force limbs into an awkward or unnatural position.
- Hold close to joints (like elbows, hips, knees) when moving arms and legs.
- Do not let your child’s limbs dangle when you lift him.
- Be careful when changing diapers and providing care. Pressing on an arm or leg can lead to a fracture.
- Always make sure the side rails of the bed/crib are up and secure.
- Ask for help when needed.