



Royal
Osteoporosis
Society

Better bone health for everybody

AN INVITATION

to be part of transforming
people's experience of later life.



Osteoporosis is one of the most urgent threats to people living well in later life – in the UK and around the world. It's also one of the most fixable problems in healthcare, if we change the way we do things.

This is an invisible disease that silently weakens people's bones, leaving them vulnerable to broken bones (fractures) following simple injuries. Just a fall from standing height, a cough, even a hug from grandchildren, is enough to cause a painful, life-changing fracture.

Beating osteoporosis speaks directly to the most serious societal challenge of the developed world.

How do we ensure that, as our societies age, people's later years aren't blighted by pain and disability, overwhelming healthcare systems with unmanageable demand?

This is a crucial, under-estimated cause, overlooked due to ageist stereotypes for too long. The reality is that osteoporosis is much more common and consequential, and thankfully more preventable, than people think.

More Common:

Half of all women over the age of 50 will suffer broken bones because of osteoporosis. That's every other mother, every other grandmother. A fifth of men of similar age are also affected.

More consequential:

These fractures are no minor inconvenience – they're the fourth most harmful of all health conditions when it comes to years lost to disability and premature death.

But it doesn't need to be like this:

Osteoporosis is treatable and fractures preventable. There are safe, effective therapies, which are highly affordable for the NHS. But two-thirds of the people who need access to these medications are missing out on them – that's 90,000 people every year.

Breaking a bone during an innocuous everyday activity, rather than a major trauma, leaves people afraid to live their lives to the full. Those affected lose confidence. It affects their relationships and mental health. The fear of suffering a fracture can see them withdraw from the world, forced into an effective house arrest. But with the right support, people can live the full lives they deserve.

We want everyone in this country to be able to look forward to an active, connected, rewarding experience of later life. We reject the ageist stereotypes about falls, fractures, lost height and curved spines being 'just part of getting older'. Unless we act, a longer life won't necessarily be a better life.

Key moments in ROS history

1985 A group of clinicians working at Bath's Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (Royal Mineral Water Hospital) began pioneering work in bone health. Together they began to raise the profile of osteoporosis, and of the treatments available to allow people to live well. Their work drew the attention of high-profile patrons who secured vital financial support. **On 24 June 1986, the National Osteoporosis Society (as it was then known) was launched.**

1992 A key milestone was reached with the launch of our free specialist nurse Helpline. For 30 years, our nurses have provided much-needed support and information to people with nowhere to turn. It proved a lifeline for patients during the pandemic, when many NHS services were closed.

1994 Her Majesty The Queen Consort began supporting the ROS in 1994. Since then she has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of our work. With her help, we began raising public awareness about the importance of bone health and fracture prevention.

2001 The first ever Fracture Liaison Service launched in Glasgow. The ROS produced the Clinical Standards for Fracture Liaison Services and has championed the adoption of this model across the NHS ever since.

2015 – 2018 The ROS fosters the establishment of 35 new Fracture Liaison Services – serving 12 million people, preventing 4,000 hip fractures and saving £66 million for the NHS.

2019 The charity was granted a protected Royal title in recognition of its work, becoming the Royal Osteoporosis Society.

2022 The ROS's new strategy launched, based on campaigning and policy influencing. The ROS's first ever advertising campaign launched enabling 100,000 people to check their risk in five months.

2023 Her Majesty The Queen Consort opened the ROS's new city centre office in Bath, celebrating the charity's move back to the city, closer to universities, hospitals and other partners.



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A message from Her Majesty The Queen Consort

“Both my grandmother and my mother died as a result of osteoporosis. At the time, the disease was seldom discussed, rarely diagnosed and was usually acknowledged as an unavoidable part of growing older.

“Osteoporosis continues to have a devastating impact on the lives of millions of people and the people they love. But now, thankfully, we know far more about the causes, symptoms and available treatments. I would like to encourage you to “check your risk” and to discover the easy steps that we can all take to improve bone health throughout our lives.”

(This message was provided as part of the launch of the ROS risk checker tool in October 2022).

There are missed opportunities for prevention too

And that starts young. All of us have bones. Our bone mass peaks in our thirties, meaning early action can make all the difference on how we age.

Very few of us give the same thought to our bones as we give to our heart, cholesterol, blood-pressure and weight.

If we did, we could take action to reduce our risk of fractures and keep our bones strong for as long as possible. That's why we want to inspire a revolution in prevention. We want to learn from the inspiring examples of the menopause and mental health campaigns in tackling stigma and getting people to take early action to change their futures.

We're committed to our public mission to raise awareness and inspire action amongst the public and policy-makers, demanding change for the 3.5 million people in the UK with osteoporosis and the millions more at risk of developing it. We want to seize the moment and beat this condition together.

If we get this right, we can prevent hundreds of thousands of avoidable fractures, extend quality of life for millions and make a game-changing difference for our NHS.

Our impact

Life-changing, free expert support

Our telephone, digital and in-person support services were used 500,000 times last year. At their heart is our specialist nurse Helpline, which answers 13,000 calls a year. Our nurses will stay on the line for as long as it takes for the last concern to be addressed. They provide invaluable emotional support to people who might otherwise feel alone.

Inspiring tens of thousands to check their risk and make changes

Our 5-minute risk checker, launched by Her Majesty The Queen Consort, has been used over 100,000 times since October 2022, with hundreds of people receiving an early diagnosis based on its results. We want to extend its reach to everyone who is at risk.

Ground-breaking research

We know it'll be the breakthroughs and discoveries that eventually beat this condition, so we're proud to sponsor world-class research. Since 1986, we've invested £6 million in ground-breaking studies, with our current focus being on research that can help close the care gap.

Influencing policy

The vast majority of healthcare spending on osteoporosis is on care for fracture patients, rather than on prevention. Hip fractures – a 'heart attack level' event – are one of the biggest killers of older people in this country, requiring over one million acute hospital bed days.

Yet hip fractures can often be prevented if we catch people after the first (normally minor) fracture. Seizing those missed opportunities will release enormous pressure on hospitals, ambulances and the social care system.



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That's why we're influencing policy change at the highest levels – including launching two high-profile Inquiry reports in the UK Parliament. In Wales, we campaigned successfully for a ministerial commitment to end the postcode lottery for fracture services by October 2024, so everyone has access to high-quality care, regardless of where they live. We influenced the Scottish Government to set up a public audit of fracture services in Scotland, so the public can have transparency on NHS performance, and services could learn from each other. We persuaded NICE to change course and recommend the first new osteoporosis drug for a decade. And we're just getting started.

A high-performing organisation at the heart of a growing movement

We're proud to have a committed, highly-engaged workforce, as shown by our 92% employee engagement rating, which puts us comfortably in the top 10% of charities.

We also have a growing membership of over 20,000 people across the four nations, with 500 committed volunteers making the case in communities up and down the UK.

And we need **YOU**

We want to attract the brightest and the best to help us beat this condition and change society for the better. Our Trustees, Ambassadors, volunteers and supporters are the people who will make the crucial difference in achieving our vision of strong and healthy bones for life – for everyone.

We'd love to speak with you about the role you can play. This is about transforming people's quality of later life in this country.

Please join us.



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