

# Handling a baby with fragile bones

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## What are fragile bones?

Fragile bones are bones at high risk for breaking or bending. This is due to a lack of collagen or minerals. Another name for a broken bone is a fracture.

Some health problems can cause babies to be at risk for having fragile bones. This includes babies who:

- Are born with soft or brittle bone diseases, such as:
  - Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI)
  - Rickets and other metabolic bone diseases
  - Osteopenia
- Are born very early (premature).
- Need certain medicines in the hospital to help them:
  - Stay very calm or asleep.
  - Stay completely still.
- Must stay in bed for a long time. They do not sit, stand or get up on their hands or knees (put weight on their bones).
- Have little movement of their arms and legs.
- Have stiff joints and muscles.

## Is it OK for me to hold my baby?

Yes. Your baby needs you to hold, touch, love, feed and care for them. This helps them grow and develop.

## How can I handle my baby safely?

Be sure to move your baby in a smooth, gentle way. Some helpful tips are listed below.

### Positioning

- Avoid any forceful pushing, pulling or twisting of your baby's arms and legs.
- Do not lift your baby from under their arms or around their ribs. This can cause their ribs to break.
- To pick up your baby safely:
  - Spread your fingers as wide as possible.
  - Use 1 hand to support your baby's head and shoulders.
  - Use your other hand to support their bottom.
  - Support their arms and legs. Do not let them hang down or dangle.

### Diapering, bathing and dressing

- Do not lift your baby by their ankles for diaper changes. Instead, roll them onto their side or lift their bottom with your open hand.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Handling a baby with fragile bones, continued

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- When bathing them, place clean bath towels on the bottom and sides of a baby bathtub to make a softer surface.
- Avoid pulling on their arms and legs when dressing and undressing them. Instead, use your hand to reach through the hand and foot openings to guide your baby's arms and legs into their clothes.

## How can I help prevent broken bones?

- Help your baby with gentle weight-bearing activities like being on their hands and knees, sitting up and standing. This can help make their bones stronger.
- Talk with the doctor about foods and drinks your baby needs for healthy bones.

## How can I tell if my baby has a broken bone?

A broken bone may include any of these signs in the area:

- Swelling or redness
- Decreased use or movement
- Crying or other signs of pain when touched

## When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if:

- You see any signs of a broken bone.
- You have any questions or concerns about your baby.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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