

Fracture

A fracture is a broken bone. A bone may be completely fractured or partially fractured in any number of ways (crosswise, lengthwise, in multiple pieces).

Types of Fractures

Bones are rigid, but they do bend or "give" somewhat when an outside force is applied. However, if the force is too great, the bones will break, just as a plastic ruler breaks when it is bent too far.

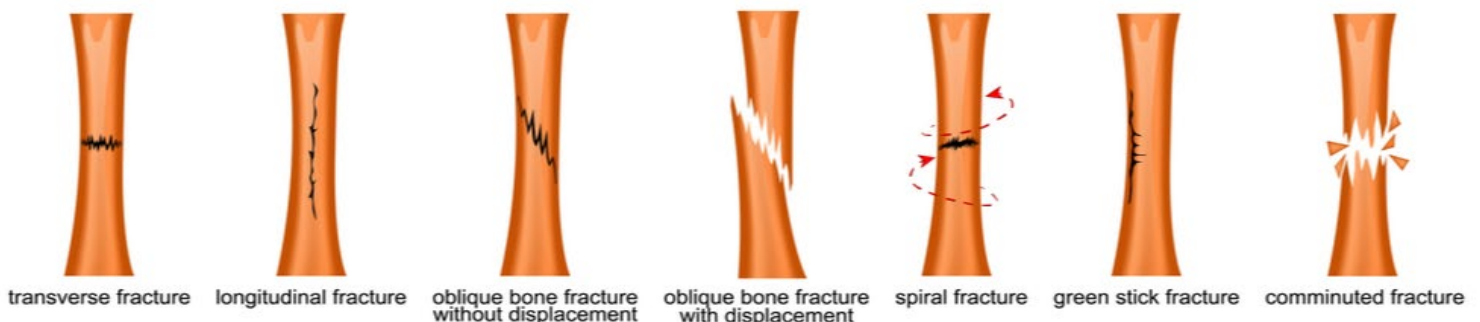
The severity of a fracture usually depends on the force that caused the break. If the bone's breaking point has been exceeded only slightly, then the bone may crack rather than break all the way through. If the force is extreme, such as in an automobile crash or a gunshot, the bone may shatter.

If the bone breaks in such a way that bone fragments stick out through the skin, or a wound penetrates down to the broken bone, the fracture is called an "open" fracture. This type of fracture is particularly serious because once the skin is broken, infection in both the wound and the bone can occur.

Common types of fractures include:

- **Stable fracture.** The broken ends of the bone line up and are barely out of place.
- **Open, compound fracture.** The skin may be pierced by the bone or by a blow that breaks the skin at the time of the fracture. The bone may or may not be visible in the wound.
- **Transverse fracture.** This type of fracture has a horizontal fracture line.
- **Oblique fracture.** This type of fracture has an angled pattern.
- **Comminuted fracture.** In this type of fracture, the bone shatters into three or more pieces.

TYPES OF BONE FRACTURES



Cause

The most common causes of fractures are:



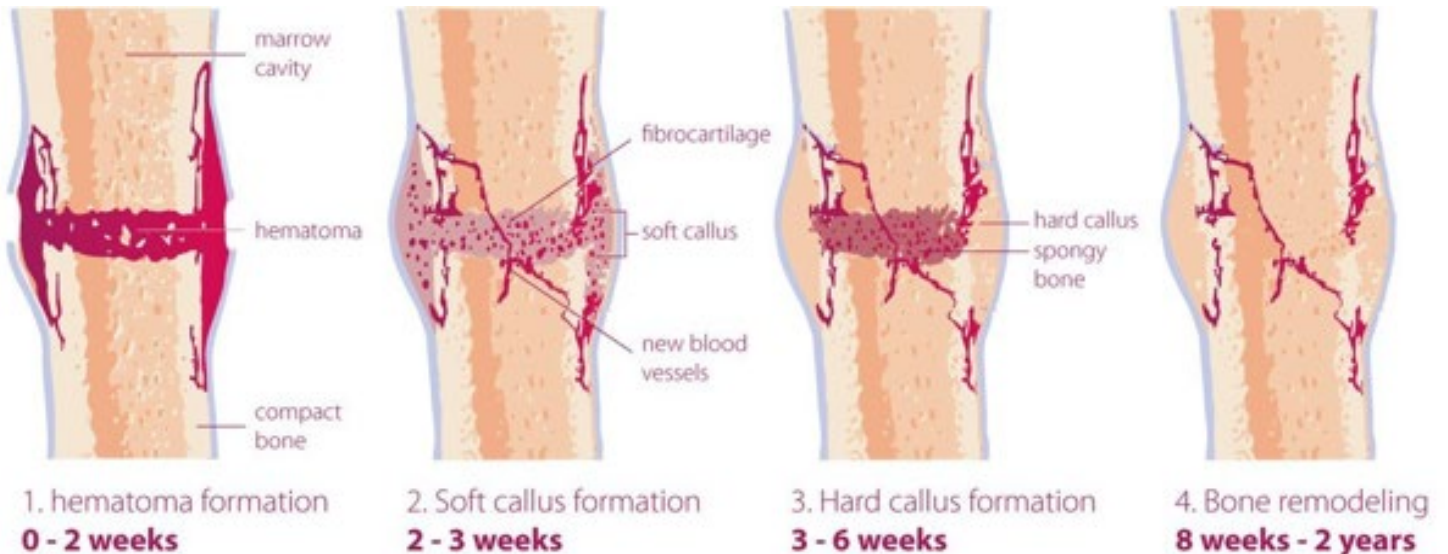
- **Trauma.** A fall, a motor vehicle accident, or a tackle during a football game can all result in fractures.
- **Osteoporosis.** This disorder weakens bones and makes them more likely to break.
- **Overuse.** Repetitive motion can tire muscles and place more force on bone. This can result in stress fractures. Stress fractures are more common in athletes.

Recovery

Fractures take several weeks to several months to heal, depending on the extent of the injury and how well you follow your doctor's advice. Pain usually stops long before the fracture is solid enough to handle the stresses of normal activity.

Even after your cast or brace is removed, you may need to continue limiting your movement until the bone is solid enough for normal activity.

During your recovery you will likely lose muscle strength in the injured area. Specific exercises will help you restore normal muscle strength, joint motion, and flexibility.



fracture healing

