

Christine, 62

Mother-to-four diagnosed with osteopenia prior to fracture, *BRISBANE*

A Civil Adjudicator with a background in professional building development and mother of four young adults, Christine, 62, Brisbane led a healthy and active lifestyle, regularly backpacking with her husband up until four years ago, when she fractured her wrist and all five fingers on her left hand.

Given her high risk for fracture – low body weight, then stage of life (menopause) and immediate family history of osteoporosis – Christine underwent regular bi-ennial bone mineral density (BMD) scans during her 50's, to monitor the health of her bones.

In 2005, Christine was diagnosed with osteopenia (brittle bones) – a precursor to osteoporosis.

In 2013, at 58 years of age, Christine quickly careered around a corner at home on glossy floor tiles in her shoes, falling hard. She braced her fall with her left arm, and while sustaining not even a bruise to the rest of her body, managed to fracture her wrist and five bones in her extended hand. This was a severe blow, because Christine was left-handed!



This is Christine's story.

"I have a family history of osteoporosis. My 75 year old sister was diagnosed with osteoporosis probably 20 years ago, and is now on medication to rebuild her bones. Surprisingly however, my mother, who was very small boned, survived 95 years fracture-free until her admission to a nursing home, where she broke her humerus (bone that runs from the shoulder to the elbow) and collar bone," said Christine.

Christine, who was a regular gym and yoga attendee with several 15 km cross-country events under her belt, also managed to avoid fracturing a bone up until 58 years of age. This was up until a simple accident at home had agonising consequences that landed her in the emergency department of her local hospital, where her left arm was placed in a thick plaster cast, with her wrist set at an ungainly angle!

"I spent 11 painful weeks in a plaster cast and thereafter underwent several months of hand-specific physiotherapy and rehabilitation to regain strength in my left arm following the accident.

It took me another 12 months to regain full movement in my forearm and fingers, and be able to rotate my wrist again, which made everything difficult, given the injury was to my dominant arm and hand. For someone who liked to play piano, and to felt and sew – using all the fine motor skills – this seemed like an eternity in frustration," Christine said.

This accident significantly compromised Christine's quality of life. She was unable to drive for three months, and has since had to alter the way that she uses her left hand.

"I tried to be philosophical about it. I really thought, "ah well, it's only one wrist; I can work around that," but that one small slip impacted hugely and I was shocked to think my arm was so debilitated after the plaster came off. Months of daily exercises and many trips to the acupuncturist to help strengthen and stretch the ligaments again finally returned my weakened fingers and hand to strength," said Christine.

Christine is a strong advocate for the new SOS Fracture Alliance – Australia’s only national alliance of medical, allied health, patient and consumer organisations focusing on the prevention of osteoporotic fractures, to “make the first break the last.”

“I would encourage the SOS Fracture Alliance to push for change, to simplify the process for those at risk for fracture.

“An educational program designed to encourage Australians to make their bone health a priority would also prove pivotal to eliminating the community’s high rates of osteoporosis,” said Christine.

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To organise an interview with Christine, please contact Kirsten Bruce or John Wanna at VIVA! Communications on 0401 717 566 / 0430 302 822.