



bone
HEALTH
IN FOCUS

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF
BONE HEALTH WHEN CARING FOR SOMEONE
LIVING WITH **METASTATIC CANCER**

FOR THE MORE THAN 13 MILLION AMERICANS who have or have had cancer, a strong support network is important.²

If you are caring for someone who has been diagnosed with metastatic breast, lung or prostate cancer, it's important to pay special attention to their bone health, and talk to their doctor about the serious bone problems* that they need to consider if the cancer has spread to their bones.¹ Having bone metastases is not uncommon when the cancer spreads.³ Bone metastases put patients at risk for serious bone problems that can limit their daily functioning, so it's important that you speak with their care team about their treatment goals.^{4,5}

ASK THE DOCTOR OF THE PERSON YOU ARE CARING FOR ABOUT THE RISK FOR SERIOUS BONE PROBLEMS



KNOW THE FACTS:

METASTATIC CANCER AND BONE HEALTH

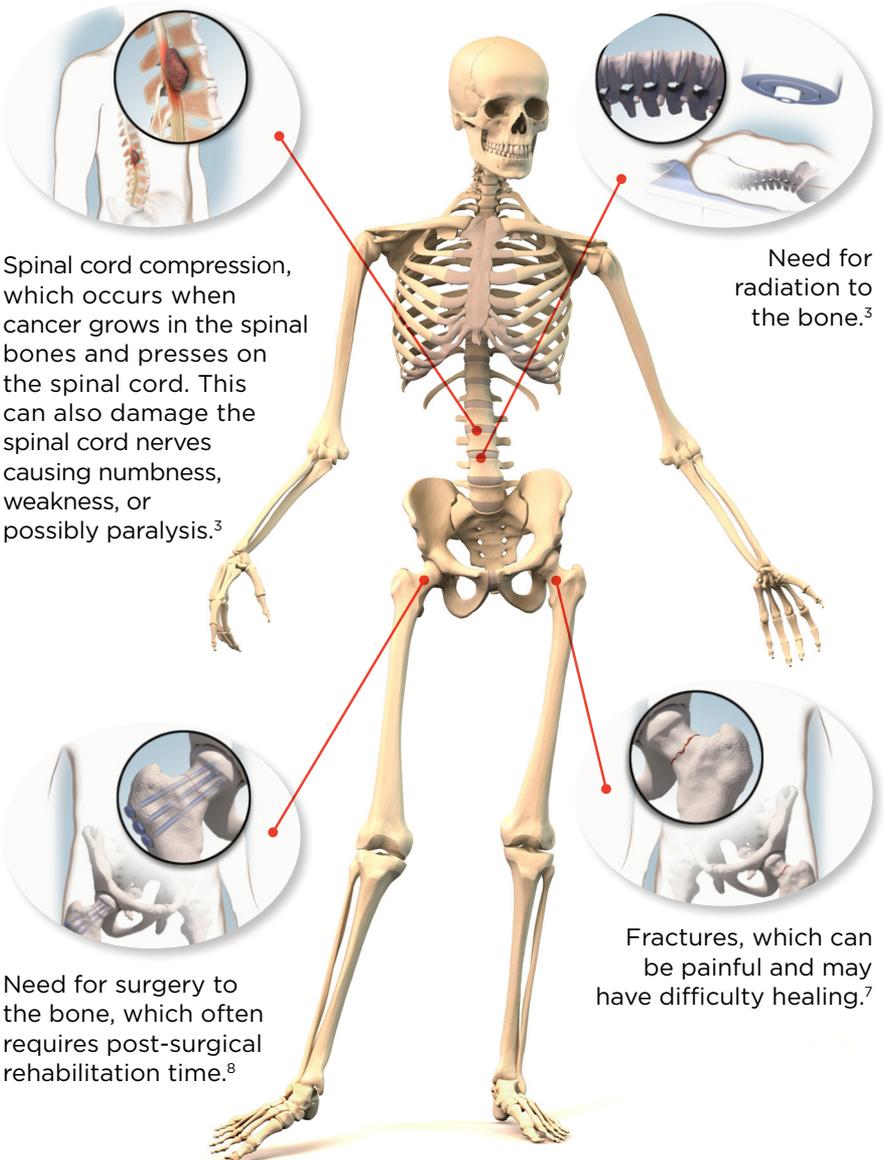
Metastatic cancer refers to cancer that has spread from where it started to another part of the body.⁶ In patients with metastatic cancer, cancer cells often settle in the bone and start growing, resulting in bone metastases.³ Once the cancer spreads to the bones, there is a risk of developing serious bone problems.⁴

* Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).¹

THE IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE DISEASE ON BONE HEALTH

The spine, hip, upper leg, upper arm, ribs and skull are the most common sites of bone metastases.³

When cancer spreads to the bones, patients are at risk of developing serious bone problems* that can make it difficult to complete everyday activities.^{4,5} Serious bone problems are:



Spinal cord compression, which occurs when cancer grows in the spinal bones and presses on the spinal cord. This can also damage the spinal cord nerves causing numbness, weakness, or possibly paralysis.³

Need for radiation to the bone.³

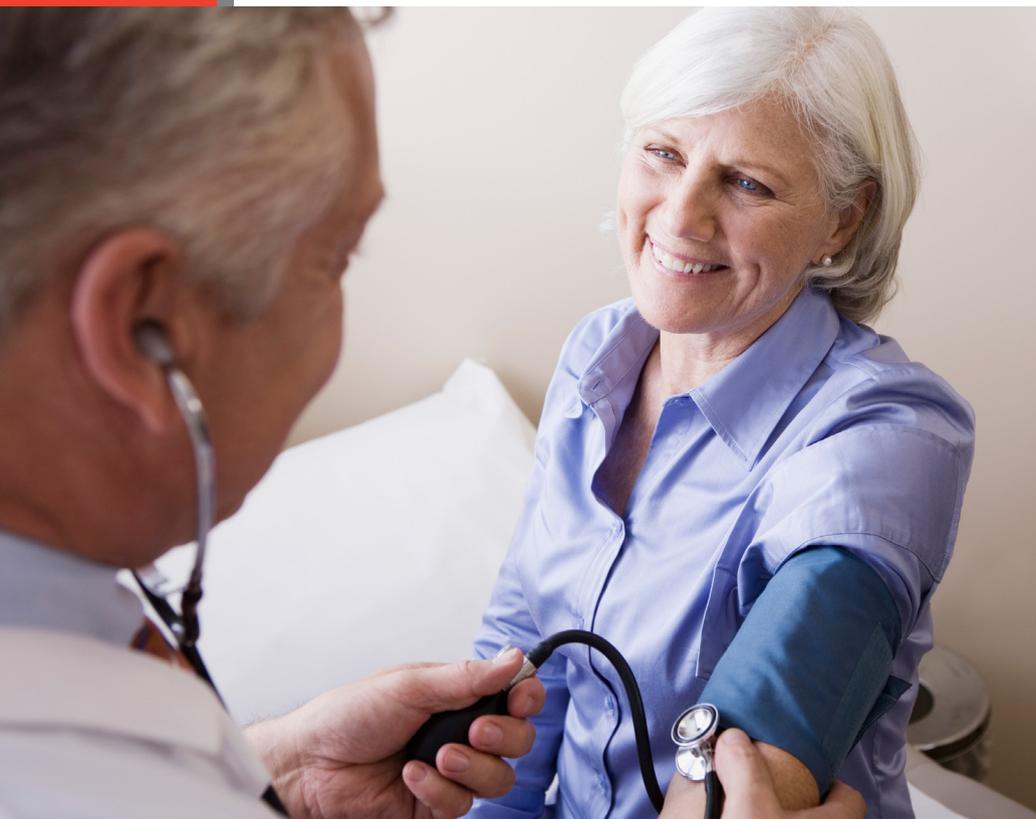
Need for surgery to the bone, which often requires post-surgical rehabilitation time.⁸

Fractures, which can be painful and may have difficulty healing.⁷

* Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).¹

IF THE CANCER HAS SPREAD TO THEIR BONES

IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT bone pain is not always a reliable indicator for the risk of serious bone problems*.⁹ As such, it is very important for the person you are caring for to have ongoing conversations with their doctors and nurses about their bone health and how it plays into their overall treatment goals.



Bone scans can help show if the cancer has spread to the bones and sometimes, bone metastases may be found before they have a chance to cause symptoms.³ It's important for patients living with metastatic cancer that has spread to their bone to be aware of the potential for serious bone problems.⁴ Ask their doctor if they are at risk for serious bone problems. Their doctor will work with them to schedule a bone scan.

*** Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).¹**

ASSISTING THE PERSON YOU ARE CARING FOR

IN MAKING BONE HEALTH A PRIORITY WHEN LIVING WITH METASTATIC CANCER



BE INFORMED. Caregivers who get the information they need are better prepared to take care of those living with metastatic cancer. Some key questions about bone health to discuss with the doctor of the person you are caring for include:

- » Is [name of person you are caring for] at risk for serious bone problems*?¹
- » What can they do to help prevent serious bone problems?
- » Should they have a bone scan and if so, how often?
- » Where can we go for more information?



BE PROACTIVE. If the healthcare team of the person you are caring for hasn't mentioned bone health, be sure to ask about it and get answers to all of your questions.



COMMUNICATE. The person you are caring for is likely to have an extended healthcare team that includes oncologists, other doctors and nurses. Make sure that everyone on the team is fully informed of treatment plans and goals.



BE A PILLAR OF SUPPORT. If the person you are caring for suffers a serious bone problem, it may be important to provide physical support, especially if their daily activity is limited by bone pain.



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO. As a caregiver for others, recognize that you also need to care for yourself. Know that you are not alone and that you do not have to do it all by yourself.

* **Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).**¹

Helpful resources

Breast Cancer Organizations

- Breastcancer.org (www.breastcancer.org)
- Sharsheret (www.sharsheret.org)

Lung Cancer Organization

- LUNGevity (<http://www.lungevity.org>)

Prostate Cancer Organizations

- Prostate Health Education Network Inc. (PHEN) (<http://prostatehealthed.org>)
- Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education & Support Network (www.ustoo.org)

General Cancer Organizations

- CancerCare (<http://www.cancer.org>)
- Cancer Support Community (<http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org>)

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