

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is a bone disease in which bones become fragile and thin and are more likely to break. In people with weakened bones, Osteoporosis develops when new bone doesn't keep up with the weakening of old bone. Bone fractures, even small ones, caused by Osteoporosis, can be very painful and long-lasting. Bone fractures can occur during everyday movements such as turning or coughing. The most common fractures occur in the wrist, hip, and spine. People with intellectual disabilities may show signs of Osteoporosis at younger ages. It is very important that individuals at risk for Osteoporosis be screened and tested early.

Symptoms of Osteoporosis

Most people have no symptoms. They do not know they have osteoporosis until they have a bone density test or a fracture.

- Backache
- A gradual loss of height
- Stooped posture
- Fractures of the spine/wrist/hip

Complications of Osteoporosis

- Anxiety, depression, or reduced self-image
- Limitations in the ability to work and enjoy leisure activities
- Acute or chronic pain
- Difficulties in performing the activities of daily life
- Loss of independence

Risk factors

- Female
- Increased age
- Not being able to walk
- Thin people/ low body weight
- Lack of exercise
- Menopause (loss of estrogen leads to bone loss)
- Medications (meds): steroids, anticonvulsants, anticoagulants, chemotherapy meds, GERD meds, psychotropic meds
- Smoking or too much alcohol consumption
- Family history of Osteoporosis
- Thyroid problems, chronic renal or chronic lung disease
- Epilepsy
- Down syndrome

Tests to Confirm Osteoporosis

- DEXA Scan (uses low levels of x-rays to determine bone density of the entire skeleton and at various sites that are prone to fracture, such as the hip and spine)

Treatment & Management

Osteoporosis can be prevented with the following interventions:

- Eat more calcium (dairy, fish, green leafy vegetables, calcium-fortified foods such as cereals and breads)/
- Take a Vitamin D supplement or multivitamin.
- Take Calcium supplement.
- Do weight bearing exercises like walking or running.
- Stop smoking and avoid excess alcohol.
- Estrogen replacement therapy (post-menopausal women).
- Medications such as Evista (increases bone density), Fosamax, Actonel and Boniva (slows down the breakdown of bone).
- Avoid carbonated beverages and excessive salt, red meat and caffeine products such as coffee and tea.

Fall Prevention

The primary goal in treating people with Osteoporosis is to prevent fractures. One way to prevent fractures is to prevent falls.

- Use a cane or walker for stability and wear non-slip shoes.
- Use grab bars near toilets and bathtubs in the shower or tub.
- Keep rooms free of clutter and remove or secure loose rugs.
- Keep stairways well-lit and use handrails on both sides.

