

Osteoporosis

Each person has specific toxic exposures along with dietary and genetic weaknesses that are causing their symptoms. Toxic exposures can be inorganic like heavy metals, DDT, VOC's, Radio-active waste and any other chemical like food additives or pesticides and fertilizers sprayed on the foods. They can also be organic or living organisms like parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. All the different possible combinations make it difficult to accurately address issues unless you have experienced medical professionals mapping through all your different clinical symptoms.

Dr. Marilyn Tucker founded The Vibrant Health Community to do Symptom Mapping to be able to bring a completely personalized plan for each person. When you join the Vibrant Health Community you have your own medical team of doctor, pharmacist and health coach. This Team specializes in Integrative-Complementary Medicine. They will work with your personal physician to bring you to a place of as much natural healing as your body will allow. For those of you that have health issues that require prescription medications, your Team can help introduce natural measures that can reduce the imbalances and complications that inevitably come with prescription medication. This can reduce side effects and possible additional drugs having to be introduced.

Definition

Osteoporosis is the thinning of bone tissue and loss of bone density over time.

Alternative Names

Thin bones

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

Osteoporosis is the most common type of bone disease. There are currently an estimated 10 million Americans suffering from osteoporosis, as well as another 18 million who have low bone mass, or osteopenia.

Osteoporosis occurs when the body fails to form enough new bone, or when too much old bone is reabsorbed by the body, or both.

Calcium and phosphate are two minerals that are essential for normal bone formation. Throughout youth, the body uses these minerals to produce bones. If calcium intake is not sufficient, or if the body does not absorb enough calcium from the diet, bone production and bone tissues may suffer.

As people age, calcium and phosphate may be reabsorbed back into the body from the bones, which makes the bone tissue weaker. Both situations can result in brittle, fragile bones that are subject to fractures, even without trauma.

Usually, the loss occurs gradually over years. Many times, a person will sustain a fracture before becoming aware that the disease is present. By the time this occurs, the disease is in its advanced stages and the damage is severe.

The leading causes are a drop in estrogen in women at the time of menopause, and a drop in testosterone in men. Women, especially those over the age of 50, get osteoporosis more often than men.

Other causes include excess corticosteroid from Cushing's syndrome, hyperthyroidism (too much thyroid hormone), hyperparathyroidism, being confined to a bed, and bone cancers.

Researchers estimate that about 20% of American women over the age of 50 have osteoporosis. In addition, another 30% of them have osteopenia, which is abnormally low bone density that may eventually deteriorate into osteoporosis, if not treated.

About half of all women over the age of 50 will suffer a fracture of the hip, wrist, or vertebra (bones of the spine).

White women, especially those with a family history of osteoporosis, have a greater-than-average risk of developing osteoporosis. Other risk factors include smoking, eating disorders, low body weight, too little calcium in the diet, heavy alcohol consumption, early menopause, absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhea), and use of certain medications, such as steroids and anticonvulsants.

Symptoms

There are no symptoms in the early stages of the disease.

Symptoms occurring late in the disease include:

- Fractures of the vertebrae, wrists, or hips (usually the first indication)
- Low back pain
- Neck pain
- Bone pain or tenderness
- Loss of height over time
- Stooped posture

STOP UNHEALTHY HABITS

Quit smoking, if you smoke. Also limit alcohol intake. Too much alcohol can damage your bones, as well as put you at risk for falling and breaking a bone.

PREVENT FALLS

It is critical to prevent falls. Make sure your vision is good, avoid sedating medications, and remove household hazards to reduce the risk of fractures. Other ways to prevent falling include wearing good-fitting shoes, avoiding walking alone on icy days, and using bars in the bathtub, when needed.

MONITORING

Your response to treatment can be monitored with a series of bone mineral density measurements taken every 1-2 years, though such monitoring is controversial and expensive. In the future, less elaborate measurements of bone turnover may become available for following the course of osteoporosis.

Women taking estrogen should have routine mammograms, pelvic exams, and Pap smears.

RELATED SURGERIES

There are no surgeries for treating osteoporosis itself. However, a procedure called vertebroplasty can be used to treat any small fractures in your spinal column due to osteoporosis. It can also help prevent weak vertebra from becoming fractured by strengthening the bones in your spinal column.

The procedure involves injecting fast-hardening glue into the regions that are fractured or weak. A similar procedure, called kyphoplasty, uses balloons to widen the spaces that need the glue. (The balloons are removed during the procedure.)

Expectations (prognosis)

Progression of the disease can sometimes be slowed or stopped with treatment. Some people become severely disabled, as a result of weakened bones. Hip fractures, which are frequently sustained by people with osteoporosis, leave about 50% of victims unable to walk independently.

This is one of the major reasons people are admitted to nursing homes. Although osteoporosis is debilitating, it does not affect life expectancy.

Complications

- Compression fractures of the spine
- Hip fractures and wrist fractures
- Disability caused by severely weakened bones
- Loss of ability to walk, due to hip fractures

Calling your health care provider

Call your health care provider if you have symptoms of osteoporosis, or if you are interested in testing available for diagnosis or early detection.

Prevention

Calcium is essential for building and maintaining healthy bone. Vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium, is also essential. To get these and other important nutrients throughout life, make sure to keep an overall healthy, well-balanced diet.

To help prevent osteoporosis, don't smoke, and avoid drinking excess alcohol.

Regular exercise can prevent bone fractures. Exercises where muscles pull on bones cause the bones to retain, and possibly gain, density.

A number of new medications for the prevention of osteoporosis, including raloxifene and alendronate, are currently available and FDA approved.

If you are a candidate for hormone replacement therapy, discuss the risks and benefits thoroughly with your health care provider.