



Health & Safety Alert #46-08-08



Osteoporosis



Osteoporosis is a condition where bones become thin and fragile. This leads to an increased risk of fractures (broken bones).

Osteoporosis is most common in older people, especially older women. The usual reasons for osteoporosis are:

- ❖ Low Estrogen after menopause
- ❖ Older age
- ❖ Family history of osteoporosis
- ❖ Cigarette smoking
- ❖ Drinking alcohol to excess

Men and women who have developmental disabilities have many possible risks for having osteoporosis at younger ages than usual:



- ❖ Not enough calcium and Vitamin D (from difficulty with eating, poor food choices, lack of sunlight)
- ❖ Medications that affect calcium and Vitamin D (anti-seizure medications, some antipsychotic medications)



- ❖ Other medications that affect bone density (Corticosteroids taken by mouth for asthma or other reasons, Depo-Provera shots, some cancer treatment medications)
- ❖ Low hormone levels in either men or women (Down Syndrome, Prader-Willi Syndrome)



- ❖ Lack of normal movement patterns ((low muscle tone of Down Syndrome, increased muscle tone of cerebral palsy, wheelchair use, being bedridden)
- ❖ Sedentary lifestyle



- ❖ Certain chronic diseases (malabsorption, insulin-dependent diabetes, hyperthyroidism)
- ❖ History of broken bones in the past

WHAT TO DO FOR PREVENTION AT HOME:



- ❖ Increase calcium in the diet (best is low fat dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, eggs, broccoli, peas, beans, nuts, whole grains)
- ❖ Increase Vitamin C in the diet (fresh fruits, fruit juice with Vitamin C added)
- ❖ Make sure the person gets some outdoor time each day for sun exposure to increase Vitamin D (even 15 minutes with face and arms exposed will help)
- ❖ Weight-bearing activities such as walking
- ❖ Exercises that involve resistance, such as working with small weights
- ❖ Provide a safe environment in order to avoid falls



RISK FACTORS FOR FALLS: Refer to Health & Safety Alert # 20 on falls for more information

- ❖ Muscle weakness or balance problems
- ❖ Lack of physical activity
- ❖ Functional limitations, cognitive impairment or dementia
- ❖ Use of psychoactive medications
- ❖ Home hazards



TALK TO THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

- ❖ If the person has some of the risk factors, explain your concern to the doctor and ask for bone density testing.
- ❖ If the person takes a medication that might be problematic, ask if it can be changed or if calcium and Vitamin D supplements might help.
- ❖ If the person has low bone density, ask about a medication to help prevent further bone loss.
- ❖ If an individual shows signs of pain, loss of motor skills, or has self-injurious behaviors, consider whether there might be a broken bone – see the health care provider for an exam.



For additional information, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at MUI.Unit@dmr.state.oh.us

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