

## Health & Safety Alert #46-12-09



### 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 may experience risks for developing osteoporosis at younger ages, some risks include:



- ❖ 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: See new Falls alert #20-12-09

- ❖ 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 questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

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