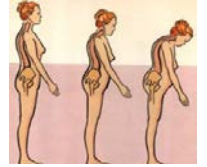




Aging with a Developmental Disability:

Osteoporosis



OSTEOPOROSIS is when the bones become thin and fragile. The bad thing about osteoporosis is that it causes 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, legumes, 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:

- ❖ 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**.

