

http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/east_king/svr/community/65056827.html

Oct 20 2009

By Giuliana Singh, DO

Osteoporosis is a chronic progressive disease which is characterized by low bone mass density and deterioration of bone tissue.

Osteoporosis results in fragile bones, and can affect any part of the skeleton. There are no symptoms — it is usually diagnosed when a fracture occurs. The resulting fractures can cause severe disability and change the quality of life of the individual. Severe fractures can require surgical repair, which also has health risks.

Risks for osteoporosis include advanced age, white or Asian ethnicity, family history of osteoporosis, a history of a fracture as an adult, body weight of less than 127 pounds, physical inactivity, alcohol and tobacco use, calcium and vitamin D deficiency, estrogen deficiency, and certain menstrual conditions. Women are particularly at risk.

Many diseases and certain medications can cause osteoporosis. Bone density screening is recommended for women over 65 years old, men over 70 years old, younger women with additional risk factors such as those mentioned above, and individuals with certain other medical problems or taking certain medications such as long-term steroids.

If the diagnosis of osteoporosis is made, the patient should be evaluated further for vitamin D deficiency or other causes such as thyroid disorders. Treatment includes calcium and vitamin D supplementation, impact aerobic exercise including walking, light weight lifting, medications to increase the density of the bones, and, sometimes, hormone replacement therapy.

Ask your doctor what the recommended dose of calcium and vitamin D is for you, how to decrease your risks for osteoporosis, and when you should be screened.

- Giuliana Singh is a doctor of osteopathic medicine at Snoqualmie Valley Hospital.