

Osteomalacia

Osteomalacia is a softening of the bones, which is often the result of a Vitamin D deficiency. In children, the condition is referred to as rickets. Soft bones tend to be more prone to bowing and fracturing than those that are harder and healthier. Osteomalacia isn't the same as osteoporosis, which is another bone disorder leading to bone fractures. The condition results from defects in the process of building bones, while osteoporosis ends up developing from a weakening of bones that were previously constructed.

The literal meaning of osteomalacia is bone weakness, or bone softening (osteo = bone, malacia = softening, in Greek).

Achy bone pain and weakness in the muscles are the major symptoms and signs of osteomalacia. Treating the condition involves replenishing the already low levels of calcium and Vitamin D, as well as treating any of the underlying disorders that might be responsible for the deficiencies.

Osteomalacia Causes

Vitamin D comes from sunlight exposure and to a lesser extent from diet. Elderly people are at risk of vitamin D deficiency as their diet may be reduced, and they may get less exposure to sunlight. In addition, the skin loses its ability to produce vitamin D as effectively.

Other causes include:

- Malnutrition during pregnancy
- Malabsorption of vitamins and minerals
- Kidney diseases and kidney failure
- Celiac disease (a disorder of the small intestine that occurs in people with an intolerance to gluten)
- Hypophosphatemia (abnormally low levels of phosphate in the blood)

How to Treat Osteomalacia:

1. Diet

Eating healthy is very important, maintaining a nutritious healthy and balanced diet. You should seek help from a nutritionist or dietician.

2. Exercise

Exercising gently will help bone density and reduce the impact of osteomalacia.

3. Supplements

When the condition occurs from a sunlight or dietary deficiency, replenishing the low levels of Vitamin D within the body will usually cure the condition. Calcium will also be taken in addition. Generally, those who have the condition will take the supplements by mouth for several weeks, if not months. Vitamin D can also be given via an injection or through veins in your arm, but this isn't very common.

If the blood levels of phosphorous or calcium aren't at their optimal levels, you can also take supplements for these minerals to balance everything out. Treating any of these conditions that affect Vitamin D metabolism, such as primary biliary cirrhosis or kidney failure, will often help to improve the symptoms and signs of osteomalacia.

Tips:

- Sun is one of the most natural sources of Vitamin D available. Spending time outside will help your body to produce Vitamin D.
- Eat foods that are rich in Vitamin D. Oily fish and egg yolks are great examples of these foods. Foods fortified with Vitamin D, such as bread, cereal, yogurt and milk, are also ideal.
- If you aren't getting enough minerals and vitamins in your diet or if you have a type of medical condition that affects your digestive system to properly absorb nutrients, take a calcium and Vitamin D supplement.
- For those with the condition, you are prone to broken bones in the spine, ribs and legs.
- Certain drugs used to treat seizures are known to cause osteomalacia.