

Paget's Disease

Paget's disease is a chronic disease attacking the skeleton of the body. The disease tends to be the most common in those who are older. Roughly, one percent of those who are over 50 years of age end up with this disease. It occurs more often in men than what it does in women. It can affect any of the bones in the skeleton, but it commonly occurs in the pelvis, spine, skull and longer bones of the arms and legs. It can either be found in a single bone or multiple bones. It can affect just one part of the bone or the entire thing.

The disease is said to run in families. As many as 25-40 percent of those with the disease have someone in the family who does as well. Many doctors believe that environmental exposure, as well as genetics, play a role in the formation of the disease.

The disease is named after English surgeon Sir James Paget (1814-1899). Normal bones are constantly re-moulding and re-modeling, with new bone being laid down and old bone being removed. This is maintained by proper calcium levels. With Paget's disease, the bone re-modeling process becomes disrupted. The new bone formed ends up being enlarged and brittle which leaves it easily fractured.

Often people are unaware that they have the disease, with various joint pains being put down to "arthritis" or "wear and tear". Certain genes have been attributed to the disease, and virus infections might be needed to trigger the disease in those who have an inherited genetic tendency to develop this condition.

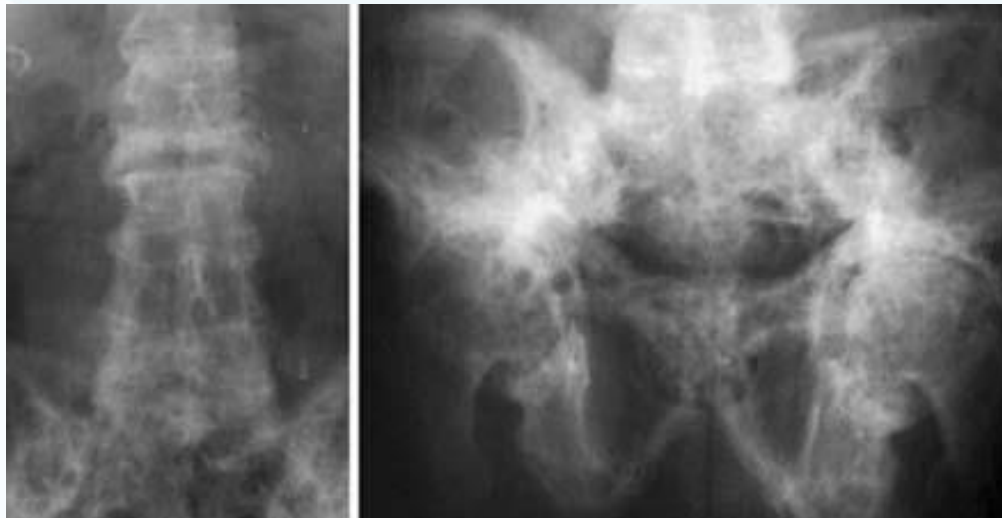
If you or your medical professional suspects this condition, there is a marker in the blood that might suggest you have it: alkaline phosphatase. Normal ranges are typically from 44 to 147 IU/L but an elevated alkaline phosphatase could certainly indicate that something is not right, and if other symptoms are present, could indicate Paget's.

Paget's disease symptoms may include headaches, bone pain and hearing loss (if the disease affects the skull), increased head size, bowing of a limb, nerve pain, cartilage wear and damage, or joint pain. Paget's disease can also cause more severe problems with the bone including a bone cancer and fracture.

Paget's Disease Anatomy

The skeletal system is made up of all the joints and bones in the body. All of the bones are a complex group of living organs that are composed of multiple cells, protein fibers and a range of minerals. The skeleton serves as a scaffold by delivering protection and support for the soft tissues that make up the remainder of the body. The system provides a series of attachment points that allow the muscles to move at the joints.

New blood cells are generated by the red bone marrow that is inside of the bones. The bones act as the warehouse for the body's calcium, energy and iron in the form of fat. The skeleton continues growing throughout childhood and serves as a framework for the remainder of the body to continue growing along with it.



How to Treat Paget's Disease:

1. Anti-Inflammatory Medications

For those who have mild pain, the only form of treatment needed is an anti-inflammatory medication. These medications can help to relieve inflammation and pain in the affected area. Short term use is recommended.

2. Monitoring Through X-Ray

If you aren't having any symptoms from the disease, you might only require simple observation. Periodic x-rays will be ordered to monitor any changes that might occur.

3. Physio

Physiotherapy, osteopathy and McTimmony chiropractic can be very useful for increasing mobility in the joints, reducing stress on the lower limbs, and reducing muscle spasm. It can aid in the relief felt by patients who may be in chronic pain, but it won't cure the problem.

4. Walking Stick

Whenever the leg or the pelvis is involved, a stick can help to decrease the pain effectively by minimizing the forces radiating through the bone. Walking sticks also help to prevent any falls, so there is a minimal risk of fracture occurring. In advanced cases, a walking frame might be necessary.

Tips:

- For those who are overweight, losing a few pounds can go a long way in minimizing the amount of pressure placed on the joints.
- Regularly performing gentle exercises help you to maintain flexibility and movement. Make sure you are going exercises that don't cause additional stress on the bone.
- Paget's disease is most common in those who are older than 50. Individuals less than 40 years of age aren't prone to the disease.
- If you have close family members with the disease, you are more likely to end up with it yourself.
- Eat a diet that is rich in Vitamin D and calcium. Both help to build strong bones.