

Osteoporosis and Dental Care

The Oral Connection

“Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey understands that my dentist can spot serious health risks like osteoporosis.”



Although osteoporosis is often called “the silent disease,” your dentist may be able to spot the early signs.

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones lose their density, becoming fragile and more likely to break. The disease is considered a major public health threat for an estimated 44 million Americans, or 55 percent of people age 50 and older. An estimated ten million individuals in the U.S. already have the disease, and an estimated 34 million have low bone mass, placing them at risk for osteoporosis.

Although it is one of the most common human bone diseases, there are very few early warning signs of osteoporosis, making it difficult to detect in the early stages when it is most treatable. Quite often, patients don’t realize they have osteoporosis or are at risk until they suffer a fracture, usually of the hip, spine or wrist. However, seeing a dentist regularly can improve chances of early detection.

According to the American Dental Association, when dentists observe bone loss in the jaw from mouth X-rays, it may be a sign of bone loss in other parts of the body, signaling osteoporosis. A dentist may be the first health professional to suspect a patient has osteoporosis based on the patient’s medical history, including risk factors and results of clinical and X-ray examination. If osteoporosis is suspected, the dentist can then refer the patient to his/her physician for further evaluation.

(continues on back)

A patient with osteoporosis who experiences bone loss in the jaw may also be at risk of bone loss around the teeth. Studies show that women with low bone material density tend to have fewer teeth.

If a post-menopausal woman frequently complains that her dentures do not fit correctly, osteoporosis may be the reason. Studies show post-menopausal women with osteoporosis needed new dentures three times more often than women without osteoporosis.

Some indicators of osteoporosis may be:

- Loose teeth.
- Gums coming detached from teeth.
- Difficulty eating or speaking.
- Severe gum disease.
- Dentures that don't fit well.

**Be sure to visit your dentist regularly ...
it could improve the quality of your life.**

Sources: American Dental Association, www.ada.org;
The National Osteoporosis Foundation, www.nof.org.



Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

Making Healthcare Work.

Products are provided by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey,
an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

® Registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

® and SM Registered and service marks of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

© 2010 Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

17286 (W0410)