



## Osteoporosis and Oral Health Fact Sheet

FOR PROVIDERS

OCTOBER 2017

### The Challenge...

In the U.S. more than 53 million people either already have osteoporosis or are at high risk due to low bone mass.<sup>2</sup> Women with osteoporosis are three times more likely to experience tooth loss.<sup>1</sup>

### What you need to know...

- Research suggests a link between osteoporosis and bone loss in the jaw (alveolar bone). When the alveolar bone becomes less dense, tooth loss can occur, a common occurrence in older adults.<sup>2</sup>
- Low bone density in the jaw can result in other dental problems such as loose or ill-fitting dentures, and may result in less optimal outcomes from oral surgical procedures.<sup>2</sup>
- Evidence suggests that there may be a link between osteoporosis and periodontitis (gum disease). Osteoporosis and periodontal disease share several common risk factors, including older age, smoking, and insufficient dietary intakes of calcium and vitamin D.<sup>2</sup>
- Radiographs performed during routine dental care may detect loss of bone density, but at this time dental radiographs are not a definitive diagnostic tool for detecting osteoporosis. Many people see their dentist more regularly than their doctor, so dentists are in a unique position to help identify people with low bone density and to encourage them to talk to their doctors about their bone health.<sup>2</sup>
- Bisphosphonates, a group of medications available for the treatment of osteoporosis, have been linked to the development of osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ), which is cause for concern. The risk of ONJ has been greatest in patients receiving large doses of intravenous bisphosphonates, a therapy used to treat cancer.<sup>2</sup>
- Strategies for reducing osteoporosis risk also may help retard alveolar bone loss. Meeting dietary intake recommendations for calcium and vitamin D is one strategy that is appropriate for a broad segment of the population.<sup>2</sup>



### Ways You Can Help...

A healthy lifestyle can be critically important for keeping bones strong. Encourage patients to take these steps to optimize their bone health:

- Eat a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D.
- Engage in regular physical activity or exercise. Weight-bearing activities—such as walking, jogging, dancing, and weight training—are the best for keeping bones strong.
- Recommend that your patients don't smoke, and limit alcohol intake.
- Recommend adding health history questions to screen for bisphosphonate usage and discuss risks with patients.

### Taking Steps for Healthy Bones

- Eat a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and Vitamin D
- Exercise
- Don't smoke
- Limit alcohol



### Footnotes:

1. [http://niams.nih.gov/health\\_info/bone/bone\\_health/oral\\_health/default.asp#a](http://niams.nih.gov/health_info/bone/bone_health/oral_health/default.asp#a)
2. [http://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(14\)62362-X/abstract](http://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(14)62362-X/abstract)

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