

Osteoporosis hits 50% of HK Elderly Women

Osteoporosis is a salient illness characterized by the loss of bone mass and structural deterioration of bone, leading to the risk of bone fractures in hip, spine and wrist. Starting from the middle-age of a person, the rate of bone mass loss is around 0.3% to 0.5% every year. In Hong Kong, around 50% of women aged 60 or above are estimated to be suffered from osteoporosis.

Age, body weight and genetic factors are recognized as the main risk factors of osteoporosis. Other risk factors of developing osteoporosis can be contributed to aging, thin bone, family history of osteoporosis, low calcium intake, alcohol abuse, smoking, Caucasian or Asian etc. Major symptoms of osteoporosis include severe back pain, limited joint movements, loss of height and spinal deformation such as kyphosis. For early detection, X-ray bone densitometry can help to measure a person's bone density before any fracture occurs.

To prevent the disease, a balanced diet and lifestyle modification are essential to slow down the loss of bone mass. A diet with calcium, vitamin D, protein and minerals (such as sodium and phosphorous) helps maintain bone density. It is recommended that the optimal daily calcium intake is 800-1000 mg for adults and 1500mg for menopausal and pregnant women. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle with normal weight and regular exercises (e.g. jogging) is also an effective way of preventing the development of osteoporosis, but smoking or drinking wine and caffeine should be avoided.