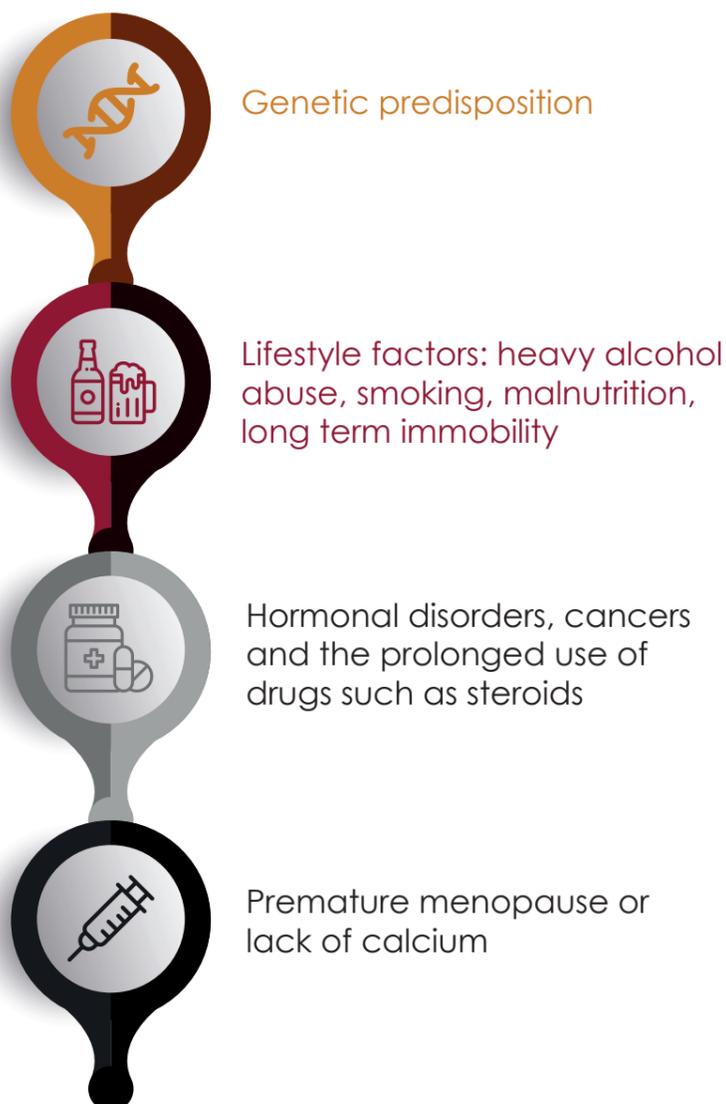


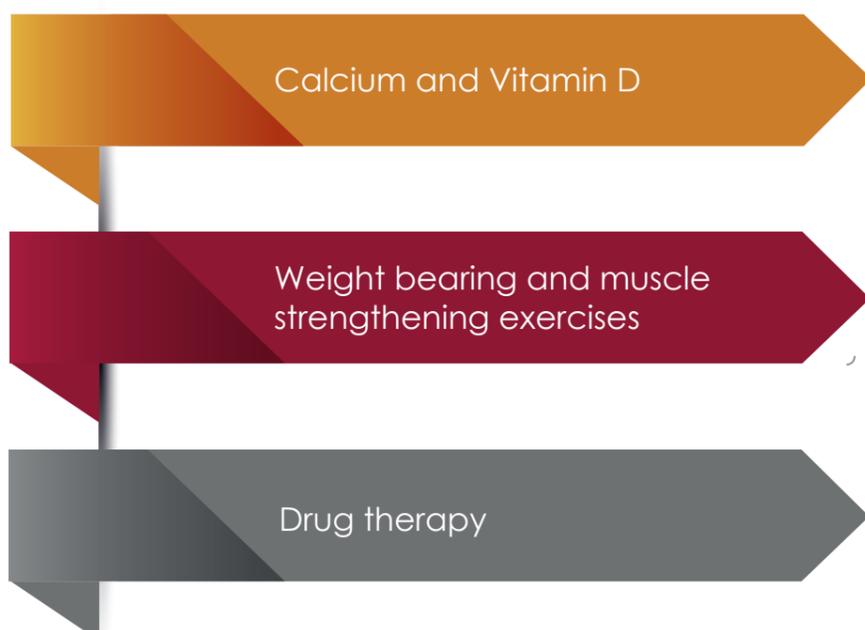
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What are the risk factors?

Osteoporosis is either primary, meaning it occurs naturally on its own, or it can be secondary to other disease processes that result in a reduction of the elements forming bone. The following are risk factors:



How is it treated?



Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

1 What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that results in bones having decreased density and quality. As a result, the bones become thin, fragile and brittle, making it easy to sustain fractures. The spine, hips, pelvis and the arms are most at risk. These fractures are difficult to treat and significantly reduce the quality of life of the affected individuals and in many cases they can unfortunately also lead to death. Osteoporosis affects both women and men and people of all races.

2 How does it present?

Most people are diagnosed with osteoporosis after they develop a fracture. Alternatively it can be due to an incidental finding when the affected individual is imaged for an unrelated reason. Fractures of the spine can go undetected until the spine collapses and shortens. The person experiences backache, unaware that it is caused by a fracture of the spine. Other bones then fracture quite easily with simple falls or minor trauma that would not otherwise have resulted in a fracture.

The pain is usually sharp and quite severe over the affected area, with the exception of most spinal fractures, which are mostly painless until very late when the spine collapses. Affected people experience worsening pain with movement, therefore they may avoid moving. Because the fall or the trauma is usually minor, most people do not suspect that they may have fractured a bone.

3 How is it diagnosed?

Often, persistent pain, despite the use of pain killers or anti-inflammatories leads to investigations that include x-rays. On x-ray, the bone density will appear noticeably decreased, which then leads to further investigations and diagnosis. The doctor will refer the person for blood tests to assess the mineral and hormonal profile. In addition, bone mineral density scans and other radiology tests may be required for the correct diagnosis to be made. It is important that the doctor establishes whether the individual has primary or secondary osteoporosis in order for appropriate treatment plans to be put in place.

4 How can I prevent it?

- Regular exercise
- Healthy eating habits
- Healthy lifestyle
- Appropriate supplementation such as calcium