

Osteoporosis

There appears to be a direct link between the health of a person's bones and their oral health. Osteoporosis affects about 10 million Americans, with approximately eight million of them being women. Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens bones and increases the risk of fractures. Bones become fragile as bone mass decreases and bone tissues deteriorate. This can make people more vulnerable to fractures, especially of the hip, spine, and wrist.

However, studies have also suggested that there is a connection between osteoporosis and bone loss in the jaw. Researchers believe that osteoporosis may lead to tooth loss because the density of the jaw bone that supports the teeth may be decreased, which means that teeth no longer have a solid foundation. Osteoporosis that weakens the jaw may lower a person's defense against **bacteria** that affect the gums, which can lead to periodontal disease.

The good news is that osteoporosis is preventable for most people. In addition to good oral home care and regular dental visits, it's important for everyone, but especially women, to receive the recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D, exercise regularly, and avoid smoking and excessive alcohol use.

***Information provided by the Massachusetts State Dental Society**