

PAGET'S DISEASE OF BONE (unrelated to Paget's disease of breast)

Paget disease of bone is a disorder that causes problems with how the bones grow. It most often affects people older than 55.

In healthy people, old bone breaks down and new bone replaces it. This happens slowly throughout life. In people with Paget's disease of bone, the bones do not break down and regrow in the normal way. This can cause some of the bones to grow too big, form abnormal shapes, and be weaker than regular bones.

Paget's disease can affect different bones in different people. The bones most often affected are the skull, spine, pelvis, and arm and leg bones. Paget's disease does not spread from one bone to another.

Symptoms

Most people with Paget's disease do not notice any symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Pain in affected bones. The disease can also cause other problems, such as arthritis (when the affected bone is near a joint, such as the knee or hip), weakness, or numbness (if the bone puts pressure on a nerve).
- Changes in appearance – In some cases, the bones change so much that the changes are noticeable from the outside. For example, if the leg bones are affected, the changes might cause a limp or make the legs look curved. Paget's disease of the skull can make the head grow bigger than normal.
- Fractures – Bones affected by Paget's disease are weaker than normal. This makes them more likely to fracture (break).
- Hearing loss – In some cases, Paget disease can affect the skull bone near the ears. This can lead to hearing loss.

Diagnosis

- Blood test – People with Paget disease usually have a higher than normal level of a specific protein (called "alkaline phosphatase") in the blood. A blood test can show this. In addition, a fasting blood test for "bone turnover markers" may also be useful.
- Imaging tests – Imaging tests create pictures of the inside of the body. Bone scans and X-rays are 2 types of imaging tests that doctors use to check for bone problems.

Treatment

Many people with Paget's disease do not need any treatment, particularly if they have no symptoms. There are treatments that can be useful for symptom control, and also in people with bone complications. Treatments can include:

- Bisphosphonate medications. These can be oral tablets or intravenous infusions. These medications suppress bone turnover, which is excessive in Paget's disease.

Disclaimer: This advice is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment and may not be applicable to individual patients. Always seek the advice and treatment of your own doctor.