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Bone pain or tenderness

Bone pain or tenderness is aching or other discomfort in one or more bones.

Considerations

Bone pain is less common than joint pain and muscle pain. The source of bone pain may be clear, such as from a fracture following an accident. Other causes, such as cancer that spreads (metastasizes) to the bone, may be less obvious.

Causes

Bone pain can occur with injuries or conditions such as:

- Cancer in the bones (primary malignancy)
- Cancer that has spread to the bones (metastatic malignancy)
- Disruption of blood supply (as in sickle cell anemia)
- Infected bone (osteomyelitis)
- Injury (trauma)
- Leukemia
- Loss of mineralization (osteoporosis)
- Overuse
- Toddler fracture (a type of stress fracture that occurs in toddlers)

Home Care

See your health care provider if you have bone pain and do not know why it is occurring.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Take any bone pain or tenderness very seriously. Contact your provider if you have any unexplained bone pain.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

Your provider will ask you about your medical history and do a physical exam.

Some questions that may be asked include:

- Where is the pain located?
- How long have you had pain and when did it start?
- Is the pain getting worse?
- Do you have any other symptoms?

You may have the following tests:

- Blood studies (such as CBC, blood differential)
- Bone x-rays, including a bone scan
- CT or MRI scan
- Hormone level studies
- Pituitary and adrenal gland function studies
- Urine studies

Depending on the cause of the pain, your provider may prescribe:

- Antibiotics
- Anti-inflammatory medicines
- Hormones
- Laxatives (if you develop constipation during prolonged bed rest)
- Pain relievers

If pain is related to thinning bones, you may need treatment for osteoporosis.

Alternative Names

Aches and pains in bones; Pain - bones

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