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Evaluation & Management of the Child with Recurrent Fractures

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Abstract

Distal forearm fractures are common in healthy childhood and adolescence; approximately one third of children will sustain at least one fracture by 18 years of age. The majority of such fractures occur around the time of the adolescent growth spurt. Fragility fractures in children can arise either from a primary bone disorder, such as osteogenesis imperfecta, or secondary to an underlying medical or a nutritional disorder. The International Society for Clinical Densitometry has defined osteoporosis in children based on the presence of either a vertebral compression fracture(s) or a combination of both a clinically significant fracture history and bone densitometry findings. Thus, in the absence of severe trauma, the presence of at least 1 vertebral compression fracture, 2 or more long bone fractures by 10 years of age, or 3 or more long bone fractures by 19 years is an indication for further bone health evaluation. Evaluation of a child with recurrent fractures is based

on obtaining a relevant medical history, undertaking appropriate laboratory & genetic investigations where necessary. As vertebral fractures are often asymptomatic in children, screening by spinal radiographs or vertebral fracture assessment by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) should be undertaken in those at increased risk, e.g. in children with inflammatory disorders who are treated with oral corticosteroids. In children it is important to adjust DXA measured bone mineral content for size (height) and for lean body mass. Where possible, management involves treatment of the underlying conditions, e.g. inflammatory bowel disease. Correction of vitamin D deficiency, provision of calcium supplements, encouraging weight-bearing physical activity and timely induction of puberty (often delayed in children with chronic medical disorders) is important. The use of bisphosphonates in children is limited to those with moderate-to-severe bone fragility and in those with vertebral compression fractures.



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