

Calcium and Vitamin D

You need Calcium and Vitamin D to make bone. Many doctors will usually also prescribe Calcium and Vitamin D if you take a Bisphosphonate. This is to make sure that there is enough Calcium and Vitamin D in your body. They can be prescribed as a combination of the two, just Calcium, or just Vitamin D. Your doctor will advise which one is right for you. Calcium and Vitamin D are normally taken every day (at a different time to the bisphosphonate).

What to do if you forget to take your tablets

Take the tablet you have missed the morning after you remember. Do not take the missed dose later that day. Then go back to taking your dose once a week as usual on your chosen day. Do not take two doses on the same day.

Treatment holiday

The National Osteoporosis Guideline Group issued guidance in March 2017, around the need for the long term use of bisphosphonates and patients who would benefit from a 'treatment holiday'. It has been decided that people taking this drug, should be offered the 'treatment holiday' for 2-3 years when taking alendronic acid after 5 years of treatment. Evidence shows that the drug continues offering bone protection over this time and most people are not negatively affected by having a break in treatment.

Side effects

As with any medication, there are associated side effects. Please see the patient information leaflet in your alendronic acid packet for further details.

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Bisphosphonates for the prevention of fractures in Osteoporosis

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اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید، لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie, proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil, vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتيسيق يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

How do bisphosphonates work?

They work by slowing down the cells which break down bone (osteoclasts). This means that they slow down bone loss, allowing the bone building cells (osteoblasts) to work more effectively. They can help to strengthen bone and help to prevent them getting any weaker. People who take bisphosphonates, are less likely to break (fracture) a bone.

Who should have bisphosphonates?

Your doctor may prescribe a bisphosphonate if you:

- Have osteoporosis and have already had fracture.
- Have a low bone density and your doctor thinks you are at risk of getting a bone fracture.
- Take long courses (more than 3 months) of steroids for example, prednisolone tablets.

You may also be prescribed bisphosphonates if you take repeated short courses of high-dose steroids. Osteoporosis is a common side-effect of taking steroids.

How quickly do bisphosphonates work?

It takes several months for bisphosphonates to work. Usually there is an increase in bone density 6-12 months after you start taking it. This helps to prevent fractures of the spine, hip, and other bones. You may still have a fracture while you are taking a bisphosphonate, as they do not totally remove your risk. They usually need to be taken for a number of years to see the full benefit.

How to take bisphosphonates

The bisphosphonate you will be prescribed, is called Alendronic Acid. This is a 70mg tablet that is taken once a week (on the same day of the week). You should take this first thing in the morning, once you are up for the day and before any food, drink, or other medicine. Swallow your Alendronic Acid tablet whole with at least 200ml of water.

- Do not take with mineral water (still or sparkling).
- Do not take with coffee, tea, juice or milk.
- Do not crush or chew the tablet or allow it to dissolve in your mouth.
- Do not lie down; stay fully upright (sitting, standing or walking) for at least 30 minutes after swallowing the tablet.
- Do not lie down until after your first food of the day, which can be eaten 30 minutes after taking the tablet.

Do not take Alendronic Acid at bedtime or before getting up for the day. This is because bisphosphonates can irritate the upper part of your gullet (oesophagus - the tube that takes food and drink from your mouth to your stomach).

Heartburn or difficulty swallowing

Bisphosphonates can sometimes cause difficulty swallowing, pain when you swallow, chest pain, or new/worsened heartburn. You must stop taking the bisphosphonate and speak to your doctor, if you have any of these problems. Your doctor may consider prescribing a different bisphosphonate, or a different type of medicine to help prevent fractures.

Regular dental check-ups

You must tell your dentist if you are taking a bisphosphonate, as you will need to have regular dental check-ups. It is also advisable to have a dental check-up before starting a bisphosphonate. This is because there is a very small chance of osteonecrosis of the jaw. In this rare condition, the jawbone does not receive enough blood and the bone starts to weaken and die. It is usually painful, but not always. In most people, this goes away after they have stopped taking bisphosphonates.