

Oral Bisphosphonates

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition where bones become brittle and weak. This occurs when the bone mass is reduced when the bone breakdown is greater than the bone production.

What are Bisphosphonates?

Bisphosphonates are a class of medication which slow down osteoporosis by preventing bone breakdown. Some medications included in this group of medications are alendronate and risedronate.

How do I take bisphosphonates?



Take at least 30 minutes before food, on an empty stomach.



Swallow whole. Do not crush or chew.



Take it with a full glass of water.



Remain upright for at least 30 minutes after taking the medication.



Avoid products high in calcium, iron or magnesium within 30 minutes of taking your medication.

Examples of products to avoid:

- Food and beverage (eg: milk, 3-in-one coffee or tea, dairy products, soya supplements)
- Medicines or supplements (eg: antacid, calcium, magnesium or iron supplements, multivitamins)

What do I do if I missed a dose?

For daily dosing

- Skip the dose for the day.
- Continue taking ONE dose the next day.
- Do not double dose.

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	Missed dose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

For weekly dosing

- Choose a day of the week that is convenient for you.
- If you missed ONE dose, take ONE dose the next day and continue on your usual schedule the next week.
- If you missed by 2 or more days, skip the missed dose and continue on your usual schedule the next week.
- Do not double the dose.

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	✓					
	✓					
	Missed dose	✓				
	✓					

Missed one dose

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	✓					
	✓					
	Missed dose	Missed dose				
	✓					

Missed 2 or more days

What are some side effects?

Common side effects include:

- Bone, muscle or joint pain
- Stomach pain
- Constipation / diarrhoea



Stop taking the medication and see a doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:



- Difficulty or pain in swallowing
- Jaw numbness



- Gum pain and swelling
- Loose teeth or tooth pain



- Heartburn that does not get better or becomes worse

What do I have to watch out for allergies?

It is important to watch out for allergic reactions when starting medications for the first time. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and seek medical attention at the Emergency Department immediately.

Signs and Symptoms of Allergy

- Swelling of facial features, especially the eyes, lips and throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over the whole body



What are some precautions that I have to take?



Inform your dentist that you're on bisphosphonates. It is important to maintain good oral hygiene and have regular dental check-ups while on bisphosphonates.



Ensure that you are taking sufficient calcium (1000mg/day) and vitamin D (51-70 years old, 600 units/day; Above 70 years old, 800units/day) daily while on bisphosphonates, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.

How should I handle and store the medication?

- Keep your medications in the original container or packaging, tightly closed or sealed in a cool dry place, away from direct sunlight.
- Keep medications out of reach of children.
- Throw away all expired medication.



Contributed by Pharmacy, Nursing and Department of Geriatric Medicine

This brochure is produced for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health or medical condition.

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