

Inform your doctor right away if you experience any of the following:

- Allergy: Swelling of eyes, lips, mouth, face, tongue, throat, difficulty breathing
- Difficulty or pain in swallowing
- Muscle cramps, spasms, numbness, tingling, seizures
- Very severe headache or dizziness, passing out, changes in eyesight
- Heart burn or chest pain
- Black tarry or bloody stools, coughing up/vomiting coffee ground material
- Very bad bone, joint or muscle pain
- Gum pain and swelling
- Loose teeth or tooth pain
- Jaw numbness

Also, inform your doctor and dentist that you are taking oral bisphosphonates before any surgery or invasive dental work (e.g. tooth extraction or implant)

What can I do to prevent osteoporosis?

- The effect of oral osteoporosis medications is only noticeable with long term, regular use
- Have a balanced diet with plenty of calcium and vitamin D, unless advised by your doctor or pharmacist otherwise
- Weight bearing and muscle strengthening exercises
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Avoid or quit smoking
- Maintain good oral dental hygiene
- Minimise fall risks

National University Hospital

5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074
Tel: 6779 5555

Website: www.nuh.com.sg

Pharmacy (Main Building): 6772 5181/5182

Pharmacy (Kent Ridge Wing): 6772 5184

Pharmacy (NUH Medical Centre): 6772 8205

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions. Information is correct at time of printing (Aug 2020) and subject to revision without prior notice.

Copyright 2020. National University Hospital

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission in writing from the National University Hospital.

Patient Information Leaflet

Oral Bisphosphonates



What are oral bisphosphonates?

Oral bisphosphonates are a group of medications used to treat conditions that affect your bones such as osteoporosis. Some examples of oral bisphosphonates include Alendronate and Risedronate. Osteoporosis is a condition that causes your bones to be weaker than normal. This means that they may break (fracture) easily even after a small bump or fall. Oral bisphosphonates help to prevent bone loss and reduce the chances of future fractures of your hips and other bones such as your wrists.

When and how do I take these medicines?

- Take 1 tablet once a week on the same day of the week.
- Take the medication first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, at least 30 minutes before any food, drink or any other medications.
- If you are taking alendronate/ risedronate table: Swallow the tablet whole (Do not crush, chew or suck the tablet). Take the medication with one full glass of plain water (not mineral water).
- If you are taking alendronate **effervescent** tablet: Dissolve the tablet in 4 ounces (half glass) of room temperature plain water only. Wait for at least 5 minutes after the effervescence stops; then stir the solution for 10 seconds and drink it. Do not swallow, chew or allow the tablet to dissolve in your mouth.
- Remain upright and do not lie down for at least 30 minutes to avoid irritation of the oesophagus (“food pipe”).
- Avoid products high in calcium, iron or magnesium within 30 minutes of taking oral bisphosphates as they will reduce absorption and the effect of the medicine.

- After 30 minutes, you may have your meal and take your usual medications.
- Oral bisphosphonates are usually taken once a week (there are also once-daily or once-a-month tablet but are less commonly prescribed). Take the medicine exactly as prescribed.
- Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all other medications you are taking or intending to take, including supplements and over-the-counter medications to reduce possible drug interactions.

What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, do not take it later in the day. Take the missed dose the next morning on an empty stomach before the first meal of the day. Do not take two doses on the same day but return to taking one dose once a week, as originally scheduled on the chosen day.

How are oral bisphosphonates stored?

Tablets of oral bisphosphonates should be stored at room temperature, in a cool and dry place away from light. Keep out of reach from children.

What tests do I need to take before, during or after taking oral bisphosphonates?

Your doctor may need to do some blood tests to check your kidney function as well as the level of minerals and vitamin D in your body.

Bisphosphonates stay in your body for long periods of time even after the medication is stopped. You may be able to discontinue therapy after five years of use if your fracture risk

is low. Continue to follow up with your doctor for monitoring and repeating bone density scans about every one to two years; your doctor will decide how often the test should be repeated.

You may also need to see a dentist before starting oral bisphosphonates.

What are the possible side effects of taking oral bisphosphonates?

Most people who take oral bisphosphonates do not have any serious side effects related to the medication. However, it is important to follow closely the instructions of how to take the medication. Lying down or eating sooner than the recommended time after a dose increases the risk of stomach discomfort.

Common side effects include mild stomach disturbances (e.g. bloating, nausea, diarrhea) or headache; bone or muscle or joint aches (usually not severe).

Rarely, oral bisphosphonates may cause jaw bone problems called osteonecrosis of the jaw. If you experience any pain in the mouth, and/or jaw, swelling or sores inside the mouth, numbness or a feeling of heaviness in the jaw, or loosening of a tooth, these could be signs of bone damage in the jaw (osteonecrosis) often following tooth extraction and prolonged use of the medication. Contact your doctor and dentist if you experience such symptoms.

Abnormal fracture of the femur (thigh bone) have been associated with bisphosphonate therapy, especially if the medication is taken for many years. Inform your doctor if you develop any new pain in the thighs.