

Patient information

Oral Bisphosphonates

Pharmacy

This leaflet gives important information about two groups of medicines which you may be started on to reduce your risk of bone fractures.

1. Oral Bisphosphonates

Oral bisphosphonates are used to treat and prevent osteoporosis. The information in this leaflet is for the two most commonly available:

- Alendronic Acid 70mg tablets.
- Risedronate 35mg tablets.

Osteoporosis is a thinning and weakening of the bones. If osteoporosis is not treated you have a higher risk of bone fractures. Bisphosphonate treatment reduces the risk of fractures or further fractures.

How should I take my tablets?

- These tablets should be taken **once a week** - on the same day each week.
- Pick a day of the week (Monday to Sunday) to take your tablet.
- If you miss a dose, just take one tablet on the morning after you remember. Return to taking one tablet once a week, as originally scheduled on your chosen day. Do not take two tablets on the same day.
- Take on an empty stomach (normally first thing in the morning), at least 30 minutes before any food, drink, medicines or supplements (other than plain water). This is to make sure your body can absorb and use the drug.
- Swallow the tablet whole and take with a full glass of water (at least 200ml). Do not chew or allow the tablet to dissolve in your mouth.
- Stay standing or sitting upright for at least 30 minutes after taking. Do not lie down. This is to reduce the risk of side effects.
- If you accidentally take too much of this medication drink a large glass of milk and seek immediate medical advice.

Are there any side effects?

Taking this medication correctly as instructed in this leaflet can reduce the risk of side effects. Most people do not get side effects but some of the more common side effects which patients may experience are:

- Diarrhoea or constipation.
- Joint or muscle pains.

If you experience any of the above side effects please speak to your GP or pharmacist. Some patients can develop symptoms of oesophageal irritation such as swallowing difficulties, new or worsening heartburn, pain on swallowing or retrosternal pain (behind the chest bone). If this happens to you, stop taking this medication and speak to your doctor.

To reduce the risk of certain side effects, it is important to maintain good oral hygiene and receive routine dental check-ups while you are taking this medication. Tell your dentist that you have been started on this medication. If you need to have any dental procedures please ensure the medical professional looking after you is aware you are taking this medication – they will be able to advise if you need to stop taking this medication temporarily before your procedure and when it will be safe to restart.

Significant rare or very rare side effects to be aware of

There are some significant side effects to be aware of which will only affect a very small proportion of patients. These include specific types of fracture of the femur (thigh bone) and damage to the bone of the ear or jaw.

If you notice any of the below symptoms during treatment, please contact your doctor.

- Any oral symptoms including dental mobility, pain, swelling, non-healing sores or discharge.
- Any ear pain, discharge from ear or an ear infection.
- Any thigh, hip, or groin pain.

Benefits

Bisphosphonate treatment reduces the risk of fractures or further fractures.

Treatment length

Please contact your GP for reassessment if you have been taking this medication for more than 5 years.

2. Additional Calcium and Vitamin D supplements

As part of osteoporosis management your doctor may recommend you take calcium and vitamin D supplements in addition to an oral bisphosphonate. Some examples of combination products available are:

Adcal D3®	Calcichew D3 Forte®	
Cacit D3®	Calfovit D3®	Calci-D®

How should I take my calcium/vitamin D combination tablets?

- These are usually taken once or twice a day – see your prescription for details.
- Adcal D3® chewable tablets, Calcichew D3 Forte® and Calci-D® tablets can be sucked or chewed. Dissolvable or caplet forms are available if needed.
- Cacit D3® and Calfovit D3® sachets should be dissolved in water before taking.
- Calcium supplements should be taken at different times to medications such as levothyroxine, iron tablets and certain other medications. Please speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Some patients may also be prescribed vitamin D supplements without calcium which are available in many formulations (for example Fultium D3®).

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

You can get more detailed information about any of your medications from the manufacturer's information leaflet – supplied with every pack of medication.

The trust's medicines information department is also contactable on 0151 529 3208.

The Royal Osteoporosis Society website can be accessed at: <https://theros.org.uk>.

If you have any further questions, ask your consultant or pharmacist.

The information in this leaflet is taken from:

- 1. www.medicines.org.uk**
- 2. <https://bnf.nice.org.uk>**

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