

Should I be taking a calcium and vitamin D3 supplement in addition to a bisphosphonate?

Yes, you should be taking a calcium and vitamin D3 supplement unless your doctor has advised you not to. Calcium, combined with vitamin D3, helps to reduce the rate of bone loss that occurs with osteoporosis. It also helps strengthen your bones and improves your muscle strength and balance.

Additional information

A patient information leaflet, specific to the bisphosphonate you have been prescribed, will be given to you when you receive your medication from your pharmacy.

If you have any queries about these, or any other of your medication, your community pharmacist will be able to provide you with additional information.

Contact us:

Pharmacy Department
Clontarf Hospital
Castle Avenue
Clontarf
Dublin 3
Phone: 353 1 833 25 21

**Oral
Bisphosphonates
*Alendronate,
risedronate and
ibandronic acid***



Information leaflet

Pharmacy department, Clontarf Hospital

What are bisphosphonates?

Bisphosphonates are a group of medications used in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. They act to strengthen bones and help reduce your risk of fractures.

Alendronate and **risedronate** are bisphosphonates which are both taken once a week only. **Ibandronic acid** is less commonly used and is taken just once a month.

How do I take my bisphosphonate tablets?

It is important that you follow these specific administration instructions when taking bisphosphonates:

- Take a single tablet once a week only, on the same day each week (or once a month if taking ibandronic acid)
- Take first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, before eating breakfast or taking any other medications
- Swallow the tablet whole with a full glass of plain water and remain standing or sitting upright for at least 30 minutes (Or 60 minutes if you have monthly ibandronate).
- Do not eat anything or take any other medications for one hour after taking this tablet.

It is important that you take the medication in this specific way to ensure that it reaches the stomach quickly and is absorbed effectively. If you do not follow these instructions it is possible that the medication may not be effective or that the tablet may get stuck in your food pipe and damage the lining.

Do not take your bisphosphonate with tea, coffee, juice, mineral water, milk, other dairy drinks, or any liquid other than plain water.

Never take your bisphosphonate at bedtime. Swallow the tablet whole. Do not split, chew, crush, or suck on it.

Calcium can affect the absorption of bisphosphonates. On the day of taking your bisphosphonate, allow a gap of at least 4 hours before taking your calcium tablets.

Are there side effects?

The most common side effects of taking bisphosphonates are nausea, abdominal pain and loose bowel movements. There is a small risk of ulcers in the oesophagus with all the bisphosphonates. For further information on these and other possible side effects please see the patient information leaflet in the drug packaging.

It is important you tell your GP or hospital doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Hip or groin pain
- Jaw pain
- Eye pain or disturbed vision
- Pain or difficulty swallowing or worsening heartburn

Also you must ensure you maintain good dental hygiene and visit your dentist regularly (at least once a year) for check-ups so they can ensure the bones of your jaw remain healthy. You do not need to stop your medication if having dental surgery, but you should mention to your dentist that you are taking this medication.