

# Bisphosphonate Treatment

## Why am I being prescribed a bisphosphonate?

In older age the density of bone reduces causing it to become weaker, this is known as osteoporosis or brittle bones.

As the bones become weaker they are more susceptible to fracture (break) even whilst undertaking everyday tasks such as heavy lifting or minor falls.

A bisphosphonate helps to build up bone by reducing bone loss caused by osteoporosis.

There are two bisphosphonates that you may be prescribed. These are Alendronic Acid or Risedronate. Depending upon your medical history your doctor will prescribe the most suitable.

You have been prescribed .....

## When and how should I take my medication?

The medication you have been prescribed is a weekly tablet. It is important that the following instructions are followed to ensure you get the greatest benefit:

- The best time to take your tablet is first thing in the morning. It must be taken on an empty stomach which means you must not have anything to eat or drink (except for water) before taking the tablet.
- Take the tablet with a large glass of water (at least 200mLs). You should not eat or drink anything other than water for at least 30 minutes after taking the tablet.
- Do not take this medication with tea, coffee, juice, squash or bottled water as it will not be absorbed properly and won't be effective in protecting your bones.
- After taking the tablet you must sit upright or stand for at least 30 minutes. It is very important not to lay down after taking these medications.

- The day that the medication is taken should be the same every week, most people choose a day where their normal routine allows taking the tablet, for example, a Saturday morning where they may get up and read the papers before breakfast.

## **What dose should I take?**

If you have been prescribed Alendronic Acid the dose you have been prescribed is a 70mg tablet, this is to be taken once a week as described above. If you have been prescribed Risedronate the dose you have been prescribed is a 35mg tablet, this is to be taken once a week as described above.

## **What should I do if I forget to take it?**

If you forget to take your medication, take it on the morning after you remember, however, do not take two tablets on the same day. Then continue taking weekly on your normal day.

## **How long will the medication take to work?**

Alendronic Acid and Risedronate can only effectively treat osteoporosis if it is taken regularly long term for a minimum of 5 years, therefore it is important not to stop taking Alendronic or Risedronate unless instructed to by your doctor.

## **How will I know that it is working?**

You will not feel any benefits from taking Alendronic Acid or Risedronate. It works over a long period of time to strengthen the bones and prevent further fractures. Your doctor can do some tests to make sure it is working for you.

## **What are the possible side effects?**

The most common side effects that you may experience whilst taking the medication are; stomach pain, indigestion or acid reflux, flatulence or bloating, constipation or diarrhoea; and muscle, joint or bone pain. If the tablet remains in contact with the mouth or throat for a prolonged period of time it can cause ulceration, this is why it is important to take with a full glass of water and stay upright for 30 minutes after taking the tablet.

If you experience worsening of indigestion or pain behind the breastbone after taking the medication, stop taking the tablets and speak to your doctor.

In rare cases fractures caused by little or no injury can occur, however this is rare and only happens if you take these medicines for a very long time (over 10 years).

If you do experience groin, thigh or hip pain whilst taking this medication please inform your doctor.

A very rare side effect is bone damage in the ear, talk to your doctor if you have ear pain, discharge from the ear, and/or an ear infection.

If it is necessary to undergo dental procedures whilst you are taking this medication, please discuss this with your doctor and dentist.

You should also inform your doctor or dentist if you experience pain, swelling or numbness of the jaw or loosening of the teeth.

### **Can I take other medications with Bisphosphonates?**

There are no medications that you must avoid whilst taking Alendronic Acid or Risedronate, however, it is important to ensure that you leave at least 30 minutes after taking them before taking any other medications.

### **Pharmacy Helpline**

If you require information about your medicines you can call the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals Medicines Information Helpline between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday via telephone on: 01302 644324.

## Notes:

### **Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)**

The team are available to help with any concerns, complaints or questions you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

#### **The contact details are:**

**Telephone:** 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059.

**Email:** [dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net](mailto:dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net)