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How to take alendronic acid or risedronate

(Weekly oral bisphosphonate for osteoporosis)

Information for patients and carers

**Grampian Osteoporosis Service
Ashgrove House
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
Aberdeen AB25 2ZA**

What are alendronic acid and risedronate?

These are medicines that belong to a group of drugs called bisphosphonates (pronounced **bis-foss-fon-ates**).

Why have I been prescribed this medication for osteoporosis?

You are prescribed this medication if you're at an increased risk of breaking or fracturing bones.

These treatments help strengthen your bones and reduce the future risk of breaking bones.

When do I take it?

You take a tablet on the **same day once a week** (daily versions are available but the weekly tablet is more convenient).

How long do I take this medication for?

It's important to keep taking this medication for at least the next five years or as recommended in your scan report.

Make sure that alendronic acid or risedronate and any calcium and vitamin D are on your repeat prescription and order them well in advance.

What if I break a bone while on this treatment?

If you do break a bone, make sure your GP is aware of this. We would suggest a rescan sooner than five years but not less than two years after your most recent scan as we won't see any changes. This will allow us to check your progress and your GP can refer you for another bone scan, if required.

How does this medication work?

Bone is a living tissue that is continually being made and removed during our lifetime.

Your bone is constantly being removed by specialist bone cells called osteoclasts. This is called ***resorption***.

Bone is then rebuilt by specialist bone cells called osteoblasts. This is called ***formation***.

The whole process is called ***bone remodelling or turnover***.

These medications are attracted to calcium, and when taken correctly, they're attracted to the calcium stored in our bones. They work by slowing down the loss of bone and make our bones less fragile, so reducing your future risk of fractures.

Why is it important to take it correctly?

Taking your medication correctly can make sure that you're giving the medication the best chance to work.

Please note: If you don't take this medication correctly, it won't reduce your risk of broken bones, so follow the instructions below EXACTLY when taking your medication.

Taking alendronic acid or risedronate correctly

- Take your weekly tablet **once a week** on the same day each week.
- Take it first thing in the morning on an empty stomach with a large glass of tap water (approximately 200mls) **and before anything else to eat or drink**. You can drink more tap water if you wish.
- Do not take alendronic acid with tea, coffee, juice, squash or bottled water; it won't be absorbed properly and won't be effective in protecting your bones.
- Swallow the tablet **whole**. Never crush, chew or suck the tablet as this can cause side effects such as mouth ulcers and heartburn.
- **Do not take any other medication or eat or drink anything except tap water for at least 30 minutes**. If you do, it will interfere with the absorption of the treatment, which will then NOT work properly and your bones will not be protected. **Please also read the calcium and vitamin D section on page 4.**
- **Stay upright for 30 minutes after taking the medication**. This is so the tablet stays in your tummy and reduces the risk of indigestion. **You can sit, stand or walk but do not bend over or lie down.**

Taking calcium and vitamin D correctly

You may have been advised to take calcium and vitamin D supplements. These are very important to help the alendronic acid or risedronate work properly.

Calcium helps give your bones rigidity and vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium.

If you've been advised to take calcium and vitamin D **twice a day**, then take these regularly at lunchtime and dinnertime.

If **once a day**, then take them either at lunchtime or dinnertime. Check the packet instructions to see if you need to take the calcium and vitamin D either before you start eating or after you've finished.

Take the calcium and vitamin D **every day** but take them **at least 2 hours after** your alendronic acid or risedronate on the day you take these.

If you're taking a vitamin D only supplement, then you can take this at any time but not within 30 minutes of your alendronic acid or risedronate.

What if I have any problems with the medication?

Tell your GP right away. If you're taking alendronic acid and have problems, then changing to weekly risedronate or vice versa might be an option as it may be better tolerated. Please discuss this with your GP.

You've been prescribed this medication because you're at increased risk of fracture. **Without medication, this risk continues, so it's important to find a treatment that suits you and other treatments are available.**

Do I need to let my dentist know?

Yes. Do tell your dentist that you're taking this medication. There is a very small risk of developing a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw*, so telling your dentist and having good dental health and hygiene are recommended, along with regular dental check-ups.

If you have dentures, make sure they fit properly and don't rub or cause any soreness. You should still have a regular NHS dental check.

For help finding a dentist, call the **Dental Information and Advice Line on 0345 45 65 990.**

* There's more information about these medications and potential side effects, including this rare condition, on the Royal Osteoporosis Society website or by contacting their helpline (see Page 6 for details).

Will I need another bone scan?

We usually recommend that you have another bone scan five years after starting your treatment (we'll write this in the report about your DXA scan). This allows us to check your progress.

If you have a fracture while taking this treatment, you might need a scan sooner than this (see page 2).

Remember: You will need a referral for a repeat DXA scan when the time comes.

What if I'm prescribed a different treatment?

The Royal Osteoporosis Society (ROS):

There is lots of information, support and advice on all treatments and also about healthy lifestyle, exercise, bone health, osteoporosis and reducing fractures on the ROS website.

They also have leaflets that you can download or they can post to you.

The Royal Osteoporosis Society (ROS):



www.theros.org.uk



0808 800 0035

Freephone helpline - including mobiles

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Answered by nurses with specialist knowledge.

What if I need help or have any concerns?

The ROS helpline (see above) is answered by nurses with specialist knowledge of the condition and its management, or you can call the Grampian Osteoporosis Advice Line.

Osteoporosis Nurse Helpline



01224 553352 (answer machine)



gram.osn@nhs.scot

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