

Using Bisphosphonates Safely

WHAT ARE BISPHOSPHONATES?

Bisphosphonates are medicines used to strengthen bones and reduce the risk of fractures.

They are commonly prescribed for conditions such as osteoporosis.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS

Most people take bisphosphonates without problems, but contact the surgery if you develop:

- Heartburn, difficulty swallowing, or chest discomfort
- Severe or persistent bone, joint, or muscle pain
- Pain in the thigh or groin (rare but serious fracture warning sign)
- Dental problems or jaw pain

DENTAL CARE

Tell your dentist you are taking a bisphosphonate.

Good dental hygiene is important.

Major dental procedures may require review of your medicine first.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR BISPHOSPHONATE

To ensure the medicine works properly and reduce the risk of side effects, please follow these steps carefully:

1. Take Your Tablet on an Empty Stomach

- Take it first thing in the morning, before eating or drinking anything (except plain water).
- Food, drinks, and other medicines reduce how well the tablet is absorbed.

2. Swallow the Tablet with a Full Glass of Water

- Use a full glass (at least 200–250 ml) of plain, still water.
- Do not take it with tea, coffee, juice, fizzy drinks, or mineral water.

3. Stay Upright for at Least 30 Minutes

- Sit or stand upright after taking your dose.
- Do not lie down.
- This helps prevent irritation of the food pipe (oesophagus).

4. Do Not Eat, Drink, or Take Other Medicines for 30 Minutes

(For some brands, this may be 60 minutes.)

This includes:

- Food or snacks
- Supplements (e.g., calcium, iron, magnesium)
- Other medicines
- These can stop your bisphosphonate from working properly.

5. Weekly or Monthly Doses

- If your medicine is weekly (e.g., alendronate 70 mg), take one tablet on the same day each week.
- If monthly, take one tablet on the same date each month.

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MISSED DOSES

Weekly tablets

- Take the missed dose the next morning if you remember within 24 hours.
- If more than 24 hours has passed, skip it and resume your usual schedule.

Do not take two tablets on the same day.

Monthly tablets

- If you remember within 7 days, take it the next morning.

If more than 7 days late, skip and take on your next scheduled date.



MONITORING AND CHECK-UPS

You may need:

- Blood tests for kidney function, calcium, and vitamin D
- Bone scans (DEXA) to monitor bone strength
- A review if you have been taking bisphosphonates for 5 years

Please attend all review appointments to ensure the medication is still right for you.

TIPS FOR BEST RESULTS

- Ensure you get enough calcium and vitamin D (from foods or supplements if recommended).
- Stay active if you can—weight-bearing exercise helps strengthen bones.
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol.