

Alendronic acid tablets

Information sheet for patients who have suffered a hip fracture

Why am I being prescribed alendronic acid?

A fractured hip is a sign that your bones have weakened. In older age the density of bones reduces causing them to become frailer, 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. Alendronic acid helps to build up bone and prevent bone loss caused by osteoporosis.

When and how should I take alendronic acid?

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

What dose should I take?

The alendronic acid you have been prescribed is a 70mg tablet, this is to be taken once a week as described above. There is also a 10mg tablet that is to be taken daily available but this is not commonly used.

What should I do if I forget to take it?

If you forget to take your alendronic acid 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 alendronic acid take to work?

Alendronic acid takes up to a year to be effective, therefore it is important not to stop taking alendronic acid unless instructed to by your doctor. Alendronic acid can only effectively treat osteoporosis if it is taken regularly long term. We recommend you continue to take alendronic acid for 5 years and then stop.

How will I know that it is working?

You will not feel any benefits from taking alendronic acid. It works over a long period of time to strengthen the bones and prevent further fractures.

What are the possible side effects?

The most common side effects that you may experience whilst taking alendronic acid are; stomach pain, indigestion or acid reflux, flatulence or bloating, constipation or diarrhoea; and muscle, joint or bone pain.

If alendronic acid 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 alendronic acid stop taking the tablets and speak to your doctor.

In rare cases fractures caused by little or no injury can occur, however this is extremely rare in patients who have been taking alendronic acid for less than 5 years and this is why we recommend you stay on these tablets for 5 years and then stop. If you do experience groin, thigh or hip pain whilst taking alendronic acid 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 alendronic acid 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 alendronic acid?

There are no medications that you must avoid whilst taking alendronic acid, however, it is important to ensure that you leave at least 30 minutes after taking alendronic acid before taking any other medications.

Pharmacy Helpline

If you require information about your medicines you can call the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital Pharmacy Helpline between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. Telephone 01603 286 286 and ask for the Pharmacy Helpline. Your questions may include:

- How and when should I take my medicines?
- Can I take other medication with them?

We cannot answer questions about your illness in general or about other people's medicines.

