OSTEOPOROSIS DRUGS: BISPHOSPHONATES

Bisphosphonate drugs slow down the natural reabsorption of bone tissue, and are therefore useful in the treatment of some common bone diseases, including osteoporosis (loss of bone density) and Paget’s disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name(s)</th>
<th>Strengths (mg)</th>
<th>Usual Doses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alendronate</td>
<td>Fosamax</td>
<td>5, 10, 35, 40</td>
<td>5-10 mg/day OR 35-70 mg/week (Paget’s: 40 mg/day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risendronate</td>
<td>Actonel</td>
<td>5, 30, 35</td>
<td>5 mg/day OR 35 mg/week (Paget’s: 30 mg/day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibandronate</td>
<td>Boniva</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150 mg/month</td>
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</tbody>
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POTENTIAL USES:
1) Osteoporosis
2) Paget’s Disease

CONTRAINDICATIONS: (Do not use if any of these conditions are present)
1) Esophageal problems (esophageal strictures, functional swallowing disorders)
2) Inability to sit upright for 30 minutes
3) Low serum calcium levels (“hypocalcemia”)

FDA PREGNANCY CATEGORY: C (Uncertain safety)

ADVERSE REACTIONS
1) Irritation of the esophagus
2) Mild lowering of serum calcium levels
3) Gastrointestinal disturbances: abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea

MONITORING REQUIREMENTS
1) Bone Density Testing (as for all patients with osteoporosis)
2) Serum calcium levels (prior to starting treatment)

Disclaimer: This handout is provided as an educational service for patients. It is not all-inclusive, and is not intended to replace other sources of drug information. Please refer to each drug’s package insert for complete drug prescribing information.
COMMON QUESTIONS

1) I understand that bisphosphonate drugs require specialized dosing instructions. How should I take my drug?

Bisphosphonates are very “finicky” drugs. In order to be effective and to minimize side effects, these drugs must be taken very carefully. Follow these important steps:

I) Take the pill on an empty stomach (usually first thing in the morning)
II) Swallow the pill in an upright position, with an 8-ounce glass of WATER
III) Remain upright for 30 minutes after taking the pill (you can move about)
IV) Do not eat, drink anything other than water, or take any other pills for at least 30 minutes

2) What should I do if I experience esophageal irritation while taking bisphosphonates?

If your symptoms are mild, make sure you are carefully following the directions above. If not, follow these directions more precisely; this should help to reduce your symptoms. If the irritation persists despite careful attention to these directions for more than one month, contact your physician to discuss another choice of therapy.

If your symptoms are severe, stop the drug immediately and contact your physician for another choice of therapy.