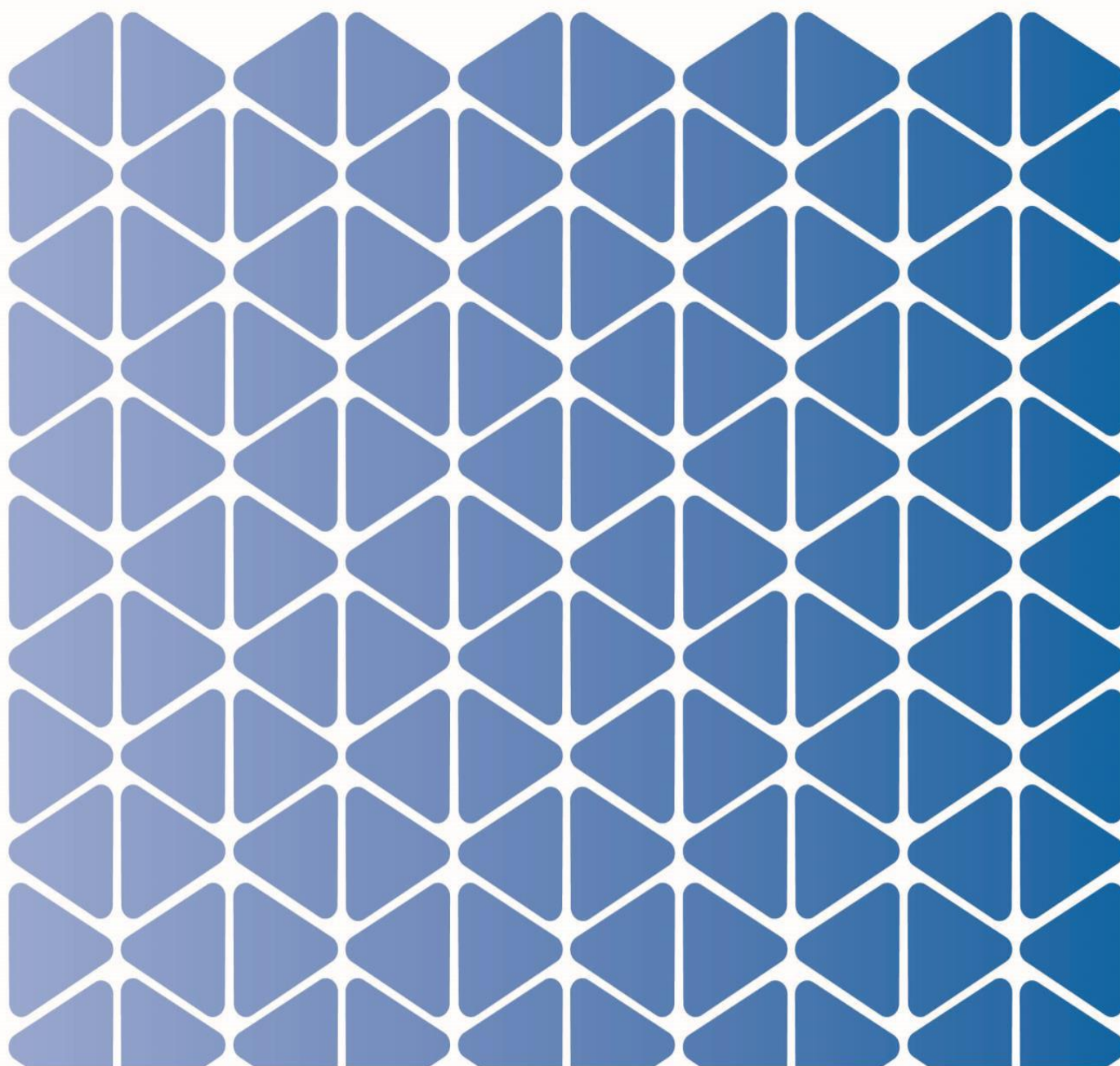


Osteoporosis Passport
You have been initiated on
Alendronate



Introduction?

This information leaflet is about a medicine called Alendronate (Alendronic acid) which is used to treat people with osteoporosis. This leaflet describes how Alendronate is given and some of its benefits and possible side effects.

What is osteoporosis?

The word osteoporosis literally means spongy (porous) bone. It causes your bones to become fragile so they break more easily.

Bone is a living, active tissue that constantly renews itself. Old bone tissue is broken down by cells called osteoclasts and replaced by new bone material produced by cells called osteoblasts.

The balance between old bone breakdown and new bone formation changes as we grow older, in that bone starts to be broken down more quickly than it is replaced, so our bones slowly begin to lose their density and therefore strength. This usually starts at about the age of 40 and continues for the rest of our lives.

We all have some degree of bone loss as we get older, but the term osteoporosis is used only when the bones become quite fragile. This disease is especially common in women after the menopause, but it can also occur in men. Osteoporosis is also common in patients receiving steroids (e.g. prednisolone).

What does Alendronate do and how does it work?

Alendronate can help to make your bones stronger and reduce your risk of broken bones, including hip and spinal fractures. It works by slowing down the cells that break down bone. This helps to restore the balance and make your bones stronger. It belongs to a group of medicines known as Bisphosphonates.

When may Alendronate not be suitable?

Alendronate may not be suitable if you:

- ♦ have difficulty swallowing
- ♦ have a problem with your oesophagus, such as Barrett's oesophagus
- ♦ can't sit or stand for 30 minutes or follow the other specific instructions
- ♦ have severe kidney problems
- ♦ have low blood calcium or vitamin D levels – these may be replaced prior to treatment.

How is Alendronate given?

Alendronate is most commonly prescribed in tablet form. Make sure you take your Alendronate on the same day each week.

The following steps are important for ensuring the treatment works properly and make side effects less likely.

- Take Alendronate as soon as you wake up in the morning
- Take on an empty stomach
- Wait 30 minutes before having your first food and drink of the day (other than plain tap water). This is to make sure your body can absorb and use the drug
- Sit or stand upright for 30 minutes after taking

If you forget to take your medication, wait until the following morning before taking and then return to your usual day the following week

How will my treatment be monitored?

When you start on Alendronate, you may have an appointment after around three months, and again after one year. This is to check you're taking your treatment properly and not having any problems.

After about five years on Alendronate, you should have a formal treatment review. Ask your doctor when this should happen if you're unsure. At this review, your doctor will check if you still need a drug treatment, and that alendronate is still the right treatment for you.

What are the possible side effects?

Common

- ◆ Inflamed oesophagus, sore throat, heart burn – if you're taking the tablets as instructed and this does not improve, tell your doctor.
- ◆ Bone, joint or muscle pain – this usually improves as your body gets used to the drug.
- ◆ Constipation – try increasing your fibre and drinking more water.
- ◆ Diarrhoea - keep hydrated and if the symptoms do not improve speak to your doctor.
- ◆ Eye inflammation - please report to your doctor if you have any eye pain or disturbance in vision.

Rare

- ◆ Osteonecrosis of the jaw. This is an extremely rare problem where healing inside the mouth is delayed, usually after major dental treatment. The general advice is to have maintain good oral hygiene and have regular dental check-ups.
- ◆ Talk to your doctor if you have ear pain, discharge from the ear, and/or an ear infection. These could be signs of bone damage in the ear (osteonecrosis of the auditory canal).
- ◆ Atypical (unusual) thigh bone fracture - Can occasionally happen after many years of treatment, even with little or no force. Talk to your doctor if you have unexplained pain in your thigh, groin or hip that does not go away.

Leading a healthy lifestyle to keep your bones strong

Factors that can help to maintain healthy bones are a well-balanced diet with adequate calcium rich foods, safe exposure to sunlight to obtain vitamin D, regular weight bearing exercise, avoiding smoking and keeping alcohol consumption within the recommended limits.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.