

Alendronate

(Say 'a-LEN-dro-nate')

Also called Fosamax or Fosamax Plus



You have been prescribed alendronate to treat or prevent osteoporosis. Osteoporosis causes your bones to thin, weaken and break easily.

Bones stay healthy by getting rid of old bone cells and growing new bone cells. Alendronate slows removal of old bone cells, allowing time to build new bone cells. This prevents bone loss, increases bone thickness and lowers your risk of fractures (breaks), especially at your hip and spine.

Changes to your bone thickness may not be seen for several months. You need to take alendronate for at least a year, and usually up to four or five years.

Follow instructions for taking alendronate carefully

Alendronate can irritate or burn the tube that takes food from your mouth to your stomach (your oesophagus) if it is not taken properly.

Take ONE tablet once a WEEK

Take your tablet on the same day each week. Choose a day that best suits your routine, eg, every Sunday morning.

(Note: Some people are asked to take one tablet every TWO weeks, so follow instructions on your medicine.)

If you forget to take your tablet, and you have already had something to eat or drink, don't take the tablet that day. Take it the next morning.

If you remember more than one day later than your usual day, do not take that week's tablet. Take next week's tablet on the usual day.

Take the tablet with a full glass of tap water

If you do not drink enough water, the tablet could get stuck in your oesophagus and irritate it.

Swallow your tablet whole. Do not crush, chew or suck the tablet or you may get mouth ulcers.

Do not take the tablet with sparkling (fizzy) water, tea, coffee, milk or juice, as these affect how alendronate is absorbed.

Take the tablet in the morning on an empty stomach

Take the tablet at least 30 minutes before eating or drinking anything that day, or taking other medicines. This helps the alendronate work better.

 Common and rare, serious side effects are listed on the next page.



Take the tablet while you are standing or sitting up

Keep sitting up or standing for 30 minutes after taking your tablet. If you lie down the tablet could get stuck in your oesophagus.

If you are unwell and cannot sit or stand upright for 30 minutes, skip that day's tablet and do not take it until you are feeling better. Contact your doctor or pharmacist if you miss more than two doses.



Eat plenty of foods containing calcium

Eating foods containing calcium, such as low-fat milk and milk products, helps with bone strength.

Ask your doctor whether you also need to take vitamin D. Alendronate is mixed with vitamin D in a tablet called Fosamax Plus.



Take care of your teeth

In rare cases, alendronate can cause problems with your mouth and jaw. To help prevent this:

- brush your teeth twice a day
- get regular dental check-ups
- tell your dentist you are taking alendronate.

Side effects of alendronate

Common side effects are usually mild and go away in time

Talk to your doctor if these symptoms cause you problems or they don't go away:

- stomach upset and bloating (gas in your tummy)
- feeling sick (nausea)
- runny poo (diarrhoea).

Serious side effects can happen rarely

Contact your doctor or medical centre, or call Healthline 0800 611 116 immediately and tell them you are taking alendronate if you have these symptoms:

- heart burn or indigestion
- difficulty swallowing or pain when swallowing
- any new or unusual pain in your hip, thigh or groin
- eye pain, red eye or changes to your vision.

Tell your doctor or dentist if you get any loose teeth, tooth pain, or swelling or numbness in your jaw.

 For more information about alendronate, visit healthnavigator.org.nz/alendronate