

# BISPHOSPHONATES

Alendronate, risedronate

**Other names:** Fosamax®, Fosamax Plus®, Risedronate Sandoz



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why you are taking this medicine

Alendronate and risedronate belong to a group of medicines known as bisphosphonates. They work by preventing bone breakdown and increasing bone density (thickness) to make bones stronger and less likely to break.

The conditions that bisphosphonates treat are:

- osteoporosis (where you have weak or brittle bones)
- Paget's disease of the bones (a condition in which the body replaces healthy bones with weak bones)

## When to take this medicine

- Take on an empty stomach as soon as you get up in the morning.
- Swallow the tablets whole (not to be crushed or chewed) with a full glass of tap water. Do not take with coffee, juice or mineral water (because of the calcium content in the mineral water).
- Do not eat or drink anything (apart from tap water) and remain upright for at least 30 minutes after taking alendronate or risedronate. This will help your body absorb the medicine and prevent damage to your oesophagus (food pipe).
- If you have been given the ONCE weekly tablet, take it on the same day of each week.
- Never take alendronate or risedronate tablets at bedtime.
- It is important to have a balanced diet containing enough calcium and vitamin D. There is some vitamin D in Fosamax Plus.

Before taking any of this medicine, make sure your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you suffer from kidney problems.
- If you suffer from **dysphagia** (difficulty or pain on swallowing) or **oesophageal disease**.
- If you have suffered from a stomach ulcer, had gastric surgery or any other problems in this area within the last year.
- If you are pregnant (or thinking of becoming pregnant).

## If you miss a dose

Take your dose as soon as possible except when it is close to the time for your next dose. If it is almost time for next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

However, if you have already had something to eat or drink, skip the dose for the day and take it on the next morning, ensuring it is at least 30 minutes before food.

If you are unwell and cannot sit or stand upright for 30 minutes after taking alendronate or risedronate, skip that day's dose and do not take until you are feeling better. Contact your doctor or pharmacist if you need to miss more than two or three doses.

## Side Effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you have any of these side effects:

- heartburn (either new or worse than usual) or any pain in the stomach
- pain when swallowing
- pain in the centre of your chest, trouble swallowing, or feeling that food gets stuck on the way to your stomach
- allergic reaction: Itching or hives, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, tightness in chest, trouble breathing

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects are of concern to you:

- bone, muscle or joint pain
- dizziness, headache
- unpleasant taste in the mouth
- mild nausea, flatulence (excess wind)
- diarrhoea or constipation

Very rarely alendronate or risedronate will cause problems with your jaw. Make sure that your dentist knows you are taking these medicines.

The list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if these side effects are of a concern to you.

## Other Medication

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Some medicines may increase your chances of getting a stomach upset if taken with alendronate or risedronate, for example:

- aspirin
- Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Nurofen), diclofenac (Voltaren, Cataflam), naproxen (Naprogesic, Naprosyn)
- prednisone (steroid tablets)

If you usually take calcium or antacids, make sure you take these at least two hours after your alendronate or risedronate tablet.

## Storage

Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.**