

Treating osteoporosis with zoledronic acid infusion through a vein in your arm

Department of Rheumatology

Information for Patients

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What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition that weakens the bones and can cause them to break easily.

What is zoledronic acid?

Zoledronic acid is given once a year through a vein in your arm (intravenous infusion). It is used to treat osteoporosis and helps to reduce the amount of bone loss caused by the condition. This treatment therefore helps to strengthen your bones and reduce the risk of fractures.

How do I prepare for treatment?

You will be asked to have blood tests before having this treatment. This is to check your levels of calcium and vitamin D, and to check that your kidneys and liver are functioning correctly. If this shows you have low levels of calcium and vitamin D, you may be prescribed supplements to be taken regularly.

You should have received a blood request form with your letter. Please make sure that you have your blood taken at your GP surgery about 2 weeks before your appointment.

You should drink enough fluids before and after your infusion to prevent dehydration.

Before starting treatment, we will also ask you about your dental health as it is important that we make sure there are no abscesses or an infection in your gums or jaw. If you do not have regular dental check-ups, we will ask you to see a dentist before treatment.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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How is the treatment given?

Your nurse will introduce themselves and explain the procedure to you. You will be asked to confirm that you understand and agree to the treatment taking place, and give your consent.

Your nurse will take your blood pressure, pulse and temperature before and after treatment.

A small needle (cannula) will be inserted into a vein in your arm. The infusion is given slowly over 30 minutes. You will be asked to stay on the ward for at least 30 minutes after the treatment has finished, so we can check for side effects.

What are the risks of side effects after the infusion?

Flushing, palpitations, feverish feelings are very rare during or immediately after the infusion.

The main side effects after a zoledronic acid infusion are:

- Up to 1 in 3 patients can develop fever, chills, headaches, and general body pain, often described as 'flu-like' symptoms. This usually lasts 2 to 3 days, particularly after the first infusion. You can take paracetamol or ibuprofen to help reduce these side effects. These side effects will reduce considerably with the more infusions you have over time.
- 1 in 10 to 1 in 100 patients may experience bone, joint or muscle pain. These symptoms are usually short lived and managed with mild painkillers.
- 1 in 100 to 1 in 1000 patients may experience inflammation in the eye causing eye pain, redness or blurred vision. If you develop these symptoms please seek medical advice.
- 1 in 10,000 patients may develop an extremely rare jaw problem in which there is delayed healing in the mouth usually after an invasive dental procedure. This condition is also known as osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ). The general advice is to maintain good oral hygiene and have routine dental check-ups.

Contact details

If you have any problems or concerns, please contact the Medical Day Case Unit (Ward 1, Leicester General Hospital) on Tel: 0116 258 4012 or 0116 258 4013 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

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