



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Risk of osteonecrosis of the jaw with Bisphosphonates and Denosumab

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:
Medicines Information

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Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet as you are going to be treated with a bisphosphonate medicine (such as ibandronic acid, pamidronate or zoledronic acid) or denosumab. These drugs may affect the way some bones work and there is a risk (up to one in 100 people may be affected) of developing a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw. This condition can also develop after treatment has stopped.

What is osteonecrosis of the jaw?

Osteonecrosis occurs when the blood supply to the jaw is reduced causing some bone cells to die. This may cause the bones in the jaw to be damaged.

Why am I being treated with a bisphosphonate or denosumab?

Your doctor will have discussed the reason for your bisphosphonate or denosumab treatment with you. These medicines can be used for a number of conditions. If you are unsure why you are starting treatment please speak to your Doctor.

What do you need to do before starting treatment?

- All patients should have a dental check-up and any necessary remedial work should be performed before starting bisphosphonate or denosumab treatment. If this is not possible, then it should be undertaken as soon as possible afterwards.
- You must tell your doctor/nurse if you have any problems with your mouth or teeth.

If you are having **dental treatment** or are due to undergo dental surgery, you should always tell your dentist that you are being treated with a bisphosphonate or denosumab.

Can I decrease my risk of developing osteonecrosis of the jaw?

There are several things you can do to reduce your risk.

- Visit your dentist for regular dental check-ups
- If you wear dentures make sure that they fit properly
- Tell your dentist about all the medications you are taking
- Maintain good oral hygiene. Your dentist can advise you on how best to do this.
- Reduce the quantity of sugary snacks and drinks that you consume.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol that you drink
- Stop smoking (call the NHS Stop Smoking Helpline on 0800 022 4332 or go to www.smokefree.nhs.uk) for help.

Are there signs and symptoms I should look out for following treatment?

You should contact your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or dentist immediately if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Feeling of numbness, heaviness or other unusual sensations in your jaw
- Pain or swelling in your jaw
- Sores in your mouth which do not heal
- Any discharge or unpleasant taste in your mouth
- Loose teeth
- Any other abnormality of your mouth.

Risk of osteonecrosis of the ear

There have been a small number of reported cases of patients on a bisphosphonate or denosumab that have experienced problems of the external ear canal. Any ear pain, discharge from the ear or ear infections during treatment should also be reported to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Reporting of side effects

If you experience any side effects, you should tell your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes side effects which are not listed in this leaflet.

The side effects should also be reported via the United Kingdom Yellow Card Scheme Website: www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard. If you don't have access to the internet ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse to report for you.

This information helps to inform wider healthcare teams of possible problems.

Should I stop taking the bisphosphonate or denosumab?

The medical benefits of taking a bisphosphonate or denosumab far outweigh the risks.

Speak to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or dentist if you have any questions.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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