

more calcium and vitamin D than is recommended as too much can be harmful.

How much calcium should I be getting?

3 to 4 portions of calcium rich foods per day, with portion sizes of 200 to 300mg.

How can I get that much calcium?

A daily intake of 1,000mg calcium can be obtained from eating all of these foods:

- 400ml milk (480mg)
- 125g plain yogurt (250mg)
- 30g hard cheese (225mg)
- Two slices of wholemeal bread (60mg).

Our body creates most of our vitamin D from direct sunlight on our skin. The amount of time you need to spend in the sun for your skin to make enough vitamin D depends on a number of factors.

These include:

- Your skin type (how dark your skin is or how easily you get sunburnt).
- The time of year.
- What time of day it is.

Short daily periods (10-15 minutes) of sun exposure **without sunscreen** during the summer months (April to

October) are enough for most people to make enough vitamin D.

Maintain a healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy weight will help prevent fractures if a fall does occur.

Alcohol

Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol appears to be a significant risk factor for osteoporosis and fractures. It is important to not exceed the government's recommended limit of 14 units per week for both men and women.

Further information

You can find further information about osteoporosis and bisphosphates at:

Patient.co.uk <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/bisphosphonates>

National osteoporosis society <https://www.nos.org.uk/>

NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk/>

Bisphosphonate drug holiday in treatment for osteoporosis

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition that affects the bones, causing them to become weak and fragile and more likely to break (fracture).

What are bisphosphonates?

Bisphosphonates are medicines that are used to treat conditions that affect your bones, for example osteoporosis. Bisphosphonates include:

- Alendronate
- Etidronate
- Ibandronate
- Risedronate

Why should I stop taking bisphosphonates?

Bisphosphonates are very helpful for preventing bone fractures in women and men with osteoporosis. Experts agree that they need to be taken for a number of years to see the benefits, but as the drug is stored in the bone, some patients can have a holiday from taking the tablets after 5 years. Others, at high risk of fracture, are better to continue for up to ten years. After ten years the benefits of taking bisphosphonates diminish, and the risk of some very rare side effects increases. These risks are rare, but include:

- Breaking a thigh bone,
- Bone, joint, or muscle pain,
- Problems with the health of your jaw.

Your doctor can advise you and discuss the options with you.

If you have been on a bisphosphonate for a long time, you may be nervous about stopping it. The choice to stop needs to be made by understanding the risks and benefits for you. If you have been on a bisphosphonate for longer than five years and have not been reviewed, talk to your doctor about whether stopping is the right choice for you.

Note: You must tell your dentist if you are taking a bisphosphonate. You will need to have regular dental check-ups. This is because there is a very small chance that you may get a condition affecting the jaw called ‘osteonecrosis of the jaw’

What happens if I stop taking my bisphosphonate medication?

Your doctor will check your bone mineral density (BMD) every two to three years after stopping a bisphosphonate. If your tests show your bones are weakening faster than expected, you may be advised to restart treatment.

You can do a lot to help prevent bone breaks or fractures:

Complete weight-bearing exercises

Weight-bearing exercises are any exercise in which you are supporting

your own body weight through your feet and legs (or hands and arms). Adults should be undertaking 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least five days a week. Examples include walking, climbing stairs, yoga, Tai-Chi, dancing and golf.

Lower your risk of falling

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if any of your medicines make you feel light-headed or dizzy.
- Have regular eye tests and wear glasses if you need them.
- Remove rugs and other trip hazards from your home.
- Be careful when going up and down stairs and always hold the bannister.
- Wear well-fitting footwear.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.

Stop smoking

Smoking has a detrimental effect on bone density, leading to a greater risk of all fractures including hip fractures and longer recovery times. Ask at your GP surgery or pharmacy about getting help to stop.

Calcium and vitamin D

Calcium and vitamin D may come from food, supplements, or a combination of both. If you are told to use a calcium and vitamin D supplement make sure that you take it. Be careful not to take