



Osteoporosis Canada

Ostéoporose Canada

COPING

'A newsletter from COPN'

April 3rd, 2009

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Thought for today: "Nurture your mind with great thoughts for you will never go any higher than you think."
Benjamin Disraeli

Questions and Answers from the Virtual Forum: The next issues of COPING will contain the questions asked by participants of the virtual forum and the answers given by our specialists. Although many of you didn't participate in the Virtual Forum, "*Osteoporosis Medications: Benefits and Risks*" the forum is available for viewing until June 2, 2009 on www.osteoporosis.ca. On the right-hand side you will see the story about the Forum. Click on the word 'more'. Part way down that page you will see 'by clicking here'. You will need to enter your first and last name, along with your email address to view the forum. Click on Launch player in selected screen size.

1. Q: What do you do if you have already tried the pill forms (of bisphosphonates) and had severe side effects? I have a history of acid reflux and inflammation of the stomach lining and esophagus. I am a female, diagnosed at the age of 47 with osteoporosis. I have tried all of the oral bisphosphonates and had severe bone pain, diarrhoea, and stomach and esophagus problems. I am now 57 years old and have not taken anything recently because I ended up in the hospital a few times to be diagnosed and treated. What can one do when they are not covered for the once a year injection? I am on disability payments. Is there a clinic trial that perhaps I can get into? My osteoporosis has gotten worse.

A: As you are having difficulties with oral bisphosphonates, the once-yearly infusion might be a good option for you. This is something to discuss with your doctor. Coverage under the Drug Benefits Plan varies from province to province and, if you are out west, or in the eastern provinces, then you are right - zoledronic acid is not covered. As the medication has gone through clinical trials and been approved by Health Canada, there are no clinical trials ongoing for zoledronic acid in Canada that we are aware of. There are other medications available: hormone therapy, SERMs, teriparatide and calcitonin. Also, even if you are on a medication, do be sure to get enough calcium and vitamin D. We recommend 1500mg calcium and at least 800IU vitamin D daily from all sources.

2. Q: I have been taking Actonel® for three years but my bone density went lower by 2% every year. Should I change medication?

A: This is a question to be discussed with your doctor, who is familiar with your medical history and individual circumstances. The three questions that experts in osteoporosis often ask when we see a decrease in bone density are:

1) Is the decrease in bone density real? Were the exams done correctly and comparable?

2) Has the patient been following directions and taking the prescribed medication correctly?

3) Are there other reasons why the patient would have a drop in bone density? Does the patient need a workup to rule out secondary causes of bone loss?

If your doctor is unsure about the above, then we would suggest that you see an osteoporosis specialist.

3. Q: I had a lot of side effects with Fosamax® and switched to Actonel®. I still have some side effects with it also, but a lot less. If I took the once a month dose would the side effects be worse or the same as taking the tablet once a week?

A: There is no way to answer this question with certainty, as one cannot predict how your body will react. We would suggest you talk to your doctor about trying the once-monthly dosage. There are two versions of it. In one case, you take a 150mg pill once a month; with the other version, you take one 75mg tablet on two consecutive days each month.

4. Q: What should be taken after 18 months of FORTEO®? (Note: This question was also asked as “I am on FORTEO®. On completion of my 18-month course, what drug do you recommend I take? I am halfway into my FORTEO® treatment.”)

A: This is a question to discuss with your doctor. Because the safety and efficacy of FORTEO® have not been evaluated beyond two years, it is recommended at present that the individual take FORTEO® for 18 months, followed by an antiresorptive therapy. Antiresorptive therapy include such medications as bisphosphonates (Fosamax® and Actonel®) and SERMs (Evista®) for example.

Funny Bone:

A Way with Words:

- ✓ Sign in a Laundromat: Please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.
- ✓ Sign in a department store: Bargain Basement Upstairs
- ✓ Outside a farm: Horse manure \$1.00 or Do-It-Yourself \$.50
- ✓ In an office: After tea break staff should empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board.

Remember: It is important for you to eat a **healthy diet**, get some appropriate **exercise**, take your **calcium and vitamin D** and if your doctor has prescribed a **medication** don't forget to take it as directed.

COPN WEEKLY will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful. Don't forget to log on to www.osteoporosis.ca for up to date information.

The material contained in this newsletter is provided for general information only. It should not be relied on to suggest a course of treatment for a particular individual or as a substitute for consultation with qualified health professionals who are familiar with your individual medical needs. Should you have any health care related questions or concerns, you should contact your physician. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this or any newsletter.