

Important Information about Fosamax & Actonel Regarding Jaw Bone Damage

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advised dentists and cancer physicians on May 5, 2005 that the professional product labeling, or package inserts, for the inject-able drugs zoledronic acid (ZOMETA) and pamidronate (AREDIA) had been revised to warn about the possibility of osteonecrosis of the jaw with the use of these drugs. Osteonecrosis literally means “bone death.”

Both zoledronic acid and pamidronate are produced by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation of East Nanover, NJ.

Zoledronic acid is approved by the FDA to treat high blood levels of calcium in cancer patients. (Hypercalcemia of malignancy), the treatment of patients with multiple myeloma, and the treatment of patients with documented bone damage metastase from their cancers in conjunction with standard cancer treatment. Pamidronate is approved for the treatment of Paget’s disease, bone metastases of breast cancer, and multiple myeloma.

Cancer patients receiving treatment with zoledronic acid and pamidronate have experienced osteonecrosis of the jaw. The revised package inserts for these drugs now recommend that cancer patients receive a dental examination prior to beginning treatment with either of these drugs. The inserts also advise that patients using either of these drugs should avoid invasive dental procedures during treatment with these drugs. If a patient does develop osteonecrosis of the jaw, dental surgery may make the condition worse.

The typical signs and symptoms of osteonecrosis of the jaw include, but are not limited to: pain, swelling, or infection of the gums; loosening of the teeth; poor healing of the gums; numbness or a feeling of heaviness of the jaw; drainage and exposed bone. Patients with the least serious form of this condition may remain asymptomatic; in the most serious cases, some may require the removal of sections of the jaw.

Zoledronic acid and pamidronate belong to the family of drugs known as bisphosphonates. Other members of this family include the oral drugs alendroate (FOSAMAX) and risedronate (ACTONEL). These two drugs are approved by the FDA to treat osteoporosis in both men and postmenopausal women and to treat Paget’s disease. They are also approved to treat osteoporosis caused by corticosteroids, but should not be used for this purposes. For women at risk of developing osteoporosis, alendronate and risdronate are also approved to prevent osteoporosis from developing.

The bottom line:

If you take the above-mentioned drugs to prevent osteoporosis, you may be at risk of losing sections of your jawbone to osteonecrosis.

What you can do:

We know that chlorophyll and vitamin C are important in building bones. Omega 3 fats, raw bone meal supplements, weight bearing exercises and a diet consisting of live phytonutrients will build strong bone and will also rebuild bone ends—cartilage, tendons and ligaments.