



# Care for patients taking bisphosphonates

Your doctor may prescribe bisphosphonates to help control bone diseases like osteoporosis. They limit the progression of bone diseases and help prevent bone fractures, but they can affect our mouths too.

## How likely am I to have problems as a result of taking bisphosphonates?

Problems with bisphosphonates are not common but like all medications, risk can vary depending on you and your individual condition.

On average, only about 1% of patients who take bisphosphonate tablets have complications after surgery.

The risk of complications after surgery is higher if you are having bisphosphonate injections.

## How does it affect my mouth?

A rare side-effect of bisphosphonates is bisphosphonate-related osteonecrosis of the jaw (BRONJ).

BRONJ most commonly occurs after having mouth surgery and leaves part of the jaw bone exposed through the gum.

It can also happen if you have not had mouth surgery, but this is rare.

For more information on osteoporosis, visit: [www.osteoporosis.org.au](http://www.osteoporosis.org.au)

## What can I do to help prevent BRONJ?

Follow your dentist's pre-operative instructions.

While your mouth is healing, avoid wearing dentures that may agitate the wound.

And remember to visit a dental professional for regular check ups.

## How do I know if I have BRONJ?

Symptoms of BRONJ include – exposed bone, pain, swelling, bad taste and numbness.

If you are suffering from these symptoms or have any concerns please contact The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne (03) 9341 1000 and arrange an appointment to see a dental professional.

In some cases, a further course of antibiotics and some pain relief can help.

