

Dental advice for patients prescribed anti-resorptive or anti-angiogenic drugs: Prevention of MRONJ

Information for patients



Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet because you have told your dentist/ doctor that you take certain medications.

These medications may be given for osteoporosis, bone diseases or as part of cancer treatment. The drugs can be taken as tablets or given as a drip/injection. You may only have it once a year.

One of the side-effects of these drugs is the way it affects jaw bone healing leading to a condition called **Medication Related Osteonecrosis of the Jaw (MRONJ)**

What is MRONJ?

MRONJ is a rare condition in which some bone in the jaw becomes exposed. This can occur randomly or following certain dental treatments. Most commonly it occurs after dental extractions, dental implants or as a result of poorly fitting dentures.

MRONJ can be painful and is difficult to manage. Currently there is no cure.

Am I likely to get MRONJ?

The risk of developing MRONJ is low, but can be affected by a few different things:

Why you are taking the medicine:

- If you are taking the medicine to treat or prevent osteoporosis then your risk is very low, between 1 in 1000 and 1 in 10,000.
- If you are taking the medicine to manage cancer your risk is higher, but still only around 1 in 100.
- If you are taking the medicine for myeloma there is evidence your risk is higher than other groups, around 3 in 100.

How long you have been taking the medicine for:

- If you take the medicine for osteoporosis and have been taking it for five years or more then your risk will increase but remains low.

Having a tooth removed, or having surgery in your mouth:

- Most cases of MRONJ occur after a dental extraction. This is why it is best to avoid unnecessary dental extractions and surgery if you are at risk of MRONJ. Sometimes if a tooth is painful or infected extraction is the only option.

Other risk factors

These things can increase your risk of getting MRONJ:

- Untreated dental disease, gum disease and poor oral hygiene.
- Loose dentures: dentures rubbing on your gum might make MRONJ more likely.
- Smoking.
- Diabetes: Poorly controlled diabetes may increase your risk of getting MRONJ.
- Steroids: taking steroid medicines such as prednisolone or hydrocortisone may increase your risk of getting MRONJ.

What are the risks associated with dental treatment?

The risk is very low to non-existent for most ordinary treatments such as fillings. The risk is increased if you need treatment that affects bone (like a tooth extraction) but is still considered low.

You are at greater risk of problems if you do not treat dental disease. Smoking, sugar and excessive alcohol can all increase the risk of developing some dental diseases.

How can I reduce my risk?

There are several things you can do to reduce the risk of MRONJ:

- Visit your dentist for regular check-ups.
- Tell your dentist about all the medications you are taking and your medical history.
- Before an extraction your dentist may refer you to a specialist for advice.
- Brush your teeth twice a day using a high fluoride toothpaste.
- Stop smoking.
- Reduce the frequency of sugary snacks and drinks.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.
- If your dentures are rubbing, stop wearing them and see your dentist.
- Do not wear your denture immediately after a tooth extraction.

Smoking, sugar and excessive alcohol can all increase the risk of developing some dental diseases.

Remember, MRONJ is uncommon.

Looking after your oral health will reduce your risk even more.

Should I stop taking the drug?

No, you should continue to take your medication as the medical benefits are likely to far outweigh the risks.

Remember, MRONJ is uncommon.

The benefits of taking the drugs you have been prescribed far outweigh the risks.

Are there signs and symptoms I should look out for?

It is particularly important to look out for these signs and symptoms if you have had recent dental treatment but remember MRONJ can occur without any dental treatment.

- Exposed bone in your jaw.
- Feeling of tingling, numbness, heaviness or other unusual sensations around the jaw.
- Pain in your jaw or a bad taste.
- Swelling of your jaw.
- Pus or discharge in your mouth.
- Loose teeth.

You should contact your dentist immediately if you notice any of the above symptoms.

After a dental extraction or surgery to the jaw

You will be reviewed after around eight weeks to check that healing is complete. If you are concerned something is not right with your healing contact us for an earlier appointment.

Contact details

Oral surgery reception	0113 343 6223
Restorative reception	0113 343 6262
Dental Institute switchboard	0113 244 0111

Below is a list of the most commonly prescribed drugs known to be associated with MRONJ.

You may not be on any of the drugs below but your dentist or doctor will tell you which medications you are taking that carry a risk.

Bisphosphonate drugs		
Drug name	Trade name	Used for
Alendronic acid	Fosamax, Binosta, Fosavance	Osteoporosis
Risedronate sodium	Actonel, Actonel combi	Osteoporosis, Paget's Disease
Zoledronic acid	Aclasta, Zometa	Osteoporosis, Paget's Disease, Cancer treatment
Ibandronic acid	Bondronat, Quodixor, Bonviva, lasibon	Osteoporosis, Cancer treatment
Pamidronate Sodium	Aredia	Paget's Disease, Bone pain, Cancer treatment
Sodium Clodronate	Bonefos, Clasteon, Loron	Bone pain, Cancer treatment
RANKL - inhibitors		
Denosumab	Prolia, Xgeva	Osteoporosis, Cancer treatment
Anti-angiogenic drugs		
Bevacizumab	Avastin	Cancer treatment
Sunitinib	Sutent	Cancer treatment
Aflibercept	Zaltrap	Cancer treatment

Where can I find out more information?

The information within this leaflet is based upon the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness (SDCEP) Dental Clinical Guidance and Patient Information Leaflets regarding the Oral Health Management of Patients at Risk of MRONJ (March 2017).

These guidelines and information leaflets can be found at www.sdcep.org.uk

Other resources:

National Osteoporosis Society www.nos.org.uk

Paget's Association www.paget.org.uk

National Osteoporosis Society www.nos.org

Cancer Research UK www.cancerresearchuk.org

Myeloma UK www.myeloma.org.uk

Prostate Cancer UK www.prostatecanceruk.org

Breast Cancer Care www.breastcancercare.org.uk

What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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