



What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thin, fragile and more likely to fracture (break). Without treatment, osteoporosis can progress painlessly until a bone fractures. These fractures typically occur in the hip, spine, and wrist.

Who is at risk for osteoporosis?

In the United States, 10 million people have osteoporosis. Osteoporosis can strike at any age, but it is most common in older women. One out of every two women and one in four men over age 50 will break a bone in their lifetime due to osteoporosis.

Can osteoporosis be prevented?

There are many things you can do to keep your bones healthy and slow down bone loss. Eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, exercise and do not drink too much alcohol or smoke.

How will I know if I have osteoporosis?

Because bone is lost without obvious signs, you may not know that you have osteoporosis until a strain, bump, or fall causes a bone to fracture. Your doctor can perform a test that measures your bone thickness (bone density test) and your risk for fractures.

What are my medication options for treating osteoporosis?

Bisphosphonates are medications used to treat osteoporosis, they vary in cost but have similar benefits. Generic **alendronate** (Fosamax[®]) will provide the best value.

Below are approximate retail cost estimates based on a 30-day supply. The price you will pay is based on your prescription benefit. Brand names in parentheses are listed for your reference only.

Oral Bisphosphonates (taken by mouth):

Medication	Copayment Level	Cost	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
alendronate (Fosamax [®])	Generic	~\$12	√	√	
Actonel [®]	Preferred	~\$92	√	√	√
Boniva Oral [®]	Non-Preferred	~\$98	√		√
Fosamax [®]	Non-Preferred	~\$80	√	√	

What about injectable medications?

Injectable medications are options for patients who have problems with oral medications. They are associated with fewer stomach side effects.

- Boniva[®] and Reclast[®] are bisphosphonates that need to be injected at the doctor's office. They are given every three months or once a year and cost approximately \$1,500 per year. They are also more expensive because they require a doctor visit.
- Forteo[®] is a daily injection that helps build bone when bisphosphonates are not effective. Forteo may raise the risk for bone cancer and has only been studied for up to two years.
- Calcitonin (Miacalcin[®], Calcimar[®] or Fortical[®]) has not been proven to reduce the risk of fractures.

Do I need prior authorization for these medications?

- Generic **alendronate** (Fosamax[®]) is the best value and does not require prior authorization.
- Prior authorization is needed for all new prescriptions of brand-name bisphosphonates.
- If you are already taking one of these brand-name medications, you do not need prior authorization. You may be able to save money on your copayments/coinsurance, by talking to your doctor about generic **alendronate** (Fosamax[®]).

Are any of these medications more safe or effective?

Bisphosphonates appear to be equally effective to prevent fractures. Side effects are similar for all of the bisphosphonates taken by mouth. They include difficulty swallowing, inflammation of the esophagus and gastric ulcer.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Uncontrolled osteoporosis can cause serious problems. Generic **alendronate** (Fosamax[®]) is the best value to prevent bone loss and fractures.

Note: Since many medication options are available, our physicians and pharmacists developed this to provide you with information about the available alternatives, as well as potential advantages and lack of advantages of the various products. This medication summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies, and input from practicing doctors and specialists.



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