

OxSport – Department of Sport and Exercise Medicine

Pamidronate disodium treatment for athletes



What is pamidronate disodium?

Pamidronate disodium, commonly known as pamidronate, is a member of a family of drugs called bisphosphonates, which reduce bone breakdown.

How do bisphosphonates work?

Bone is constantly being broken down and rebuilt by special bone cells. This is called bone turnover, or remodelling.

How will pamidronate help me?

Bone turnover can become imbalanced, which can cause pain in conditions such as bone stress and bone marrow oedema syndromes. Pamidronate builds up in the areas where bone turnover is increased and slows down this process, reducing pain.

How will it be given to me?

We will give you pamidronate as a 1-2 hour infusion through a drip into a vein in your arm.

How much will be given and how often will I need it?

We will decide on a suitable dose, depending on your condition. We will also decide on how many infusions you need and how often they will be given. People typically receive 1-3 doses.

What needs to be done before I can have a pamidronate infusion?

We will do some blood tests to check how healthy your bones are. We will check your vitamin D level, which needs to be high enough before you come for the pamidronate infusion. Low vitamin D levels can stop the treatment from working properly. If it is not high enough, we will ask your GP to prescribe some vitamin D pills for you and then recheck your vitamin D level after 1-2 months.

You must also have a dental check-up before starting your treatment. We will not give you the treatment until your dentist is happy with your dental hygiene (see potential side-effects below).

What side effects might I experience?

Like all medicines, pamidronate may cause some side effects. These are usually mild and don't last long.

The most common side effects are:

- a flu like illness (this is unlikely to occur after the first dose of pamidronate)
- tiredness
- a headache lasting for 24 to 48 hours. This usually gets better on its own and does not require treatment other than taking paracetamol.

You may have a temporary increase in bone pain after you have had the treatment, but this usually improves after a few days.

A rare but serious complication (affecting between 1 in 10,000 and 1 in 100,000 people) is a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw. This is a condition where you get damage to the jawbone as a result of untreated tooth problems. This can happen because pamidronate affects all of the bones in your

body, not just the painful ones. It most commonly occurs with problems, such as infection, and dental procedures, like tooth extraction.

It is for this reason that you must have a full check up by your dentist before treatment with pamidronate, to make sure there are no unknown dental problems.

What signs should I look out for after my pamidronate infusion?

You may experience one or more of the following:

- pain and redness or swelling where the infusion was given
- skin rash
- itching or unexplained bruising
- joint or muscle pain
- nausea or sickness
- headache that doesn't respond to normal painkillers (like paracetamol)
- tender or painful eyes.

These symptoms are usually mild, get better within a couple of days and require no specific treatment. However, if they are severe or do not settle down within a couple of days, you should see your GP.

Under what circumstances should I not have pamidronate?

You should not have pamidronate if:

- you are allergic to pamidronate, any of its ingredients or another bisphosphonate
- you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy in the next 6 months or breastfeeding
- you have eye inflammation, such as uveitis.

Pamidronate does not affect the ability to become pregnant or cause any problems for male sperm, but it should not be given during pregnancy, as the effects on an unborn baby are not known. Women should also take precautions not to get pregnant for 6 months after the treatment, as pamidronate stays in the bones for long periods and may be released during this time.

What should I tell the doctor prescribing my pamidronate?

Please tell us if you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or suffer from kidney, heart, liver or eye problems. If any of these apply to you it may be safer to delay or cancel your treatment.

Will the pamidronate affect my work and driving?

Following the infusion you should not drive or go home on public transport, as there is a small risk that it can cause sleepiness and dizziness. If this occurs, please do not drive or work machinery until these effects wear off.

You should arrange to be taken home by car after the infusion. This will be more comfortable for you and also quicker for you to return to the hospital if there are any complications on the journey home.

How to contact us:

Rheumatology Day Unit

Tel: 01865 737 871

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If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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