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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Etidronate and Calcium Carbonate

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: Canada

ACT Etidrocal [DSC]

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to prevent or treat soft, brittle bones (osteoporosis).

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have soft bones (osteomalacia).
- If you are pregnant or may be pregnant. Do not take this drug if you are pregnant.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.
- If the patient is a child. Do not give this drug to a child.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or

OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## **What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?**

### **All products:**

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not take this drug for longer than you were told by your doctor.
- Have your blood work and bone density checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug works best when used with calcium/vitamin D and weight-bearing workouts like walking or PT (physical therapy).
- Follow the diet and exercise plan that your doctor told you about.
- Take good care of your teeth. See a dentist often.
- Have a dental exam before starting this drug.
- If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

### **Etidronate:**

- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- If you smoke, talk with your doctor.
- Severe esophagus problems like irritation, swelling, ulcers, and bleeding have happened with this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- Worsening of asthma has happened in people taking drugs like this one. Talk with the doctor.

- This drug may raise the chance of a broken leg. Talk with the doctor.

## **Calcium:**

- This drug prevents many other drugs from getting into the body. If you take other drugs, check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if you need to take them at some other time than this drug.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.
- Chest pain.
- Feeling confused.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Very bad pain when swallowing.
- Very bad bone, joint, or muscle pain.
- Any new or strange groin, hip, or thigh pain.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- If bright lights bother your eyes.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.

- This drug may cause jawbone problems. The risk may be higher with longer use, cancer, dental problems, ill-fitting dentures, anemia, blood clotting problems, or infection. It may also be higher if you have dental work, chemo, radiation, or take other drugs that may cause jawbone problems. Many drugs can do this. Talk with your doctor if any of these apply to you, or if you have questions. Call your doctor right away if you have jaw swelling or pain.
- Low blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or if you feel very tired or weak.

## **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Dizziness or headache.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Heartburn.
- Gas.
- Leg cramps.
- Joint pain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at <https://www.fda.gov/medwatch>.

## **How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **All products:**

- Do not take the etidronate and the calcium at the same time.
- Take with a full glass of water.

### **Etidronate:**

- Take on an empty stomach. Take at least 2 hours before or 2 hours after a meal.
- Do not eat or drink dairy products or take iron; vitamins with minerals; or products that have aluminum, calcium, or magnesium in them like some antacids within 2 hours before or 2 hours after this drug.

### **Calcium:**

- Take this drug with or without food. If you have low stomach acid levels, take this drug with food.
- If you have trouble swallowing, the tablet may be crushed or chewed and swallowed with a drink of water.

## **What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses on the same day.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.

- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## **General drug facts**

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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