

Dental Care for Multiple Myeloma Patients

You are at risk of dental problems if you take a type of medicine called a bisphosphonate. You might need to take this medicine if you have multiple myeloma or a condition called monoclonal gammopathy of unknown significance (MGUS).

Bisphosphonates

Bisphosphonates, such as Aredia[®] and Zometa[®], are medicines known as bone strengtheners. It is used to treat lytic lesions, soft spots on the bones. It is a common condition among multiple myeloma patients. It occurs when myeloma cells invade and weaken an area of one or more bones. If this happens, bones can break easily with normal activity, such as walking. A bisphosphonate helps to strengthen the bones and prevent them from breaking.

Some of these medicines are taken by mouth. The stronger types are given through an IV.

Osteonecrosis of the Jaw

Osteonecrosis of the jaw is a rare but serious side effect of a bisphosphonate medicine. It causes problems with bone healing in the jaw. It is more likely to occur with certain types of dental work, such as having a tooth pulled.



Do not have any teeth pulled after you start these medicines.

See a Dentist

You need to perform good dental health before, during and after cancer treatment. It's important to see a dentist right away after being diagnosed with multiple myeloma or MGUS. You need to have a dental exam and treat any dental problems before you take a bisphosphonate. We may delay your treatment if dental problems are not treated.

Then, visit the dentist every 6 months for regular exams and cleaning. Please tell your dentist about your diagnosis and what medicines you take, especially if you take any type of bone strengthener.

Brush your teeth after every meal and floss daily. Also, follow your doctor's other dental care instructions if you are getting chemotherapy.

Antibiotic Use

You may still have a hard time fighting infections, even if you do not take a bisphosphonate. Your body might be weak because of your cancer or its treatment.

Ask your dentist to consider giving you a prescription for an antibiotic before cleaning your teeth or doing a procedure. Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

Resources

American Dental Association

<http://www.ada.org>

American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

<http://www.aae.org>

Read “Position Paper on Bisphosphonate-Related Osteonecrosis of the Jaw: 2009 Update”

Bone and Cancer Foundation

888-862-0999

<http://www.boneandcancerfoundation.org>

Read “Osteonecrosis of the Jaw: Information for Cancer Patients.”

International Myeloma Foundation

800-452-2873

www.myeloma.org

Read “Understanding Bisphosphonate Therapy.”