Can Infusion Medications Help Prevent Osteoporosis Bone Fractures?

by JOSH DUVAUCHELLE

Infusion for Osteoporosis

Every three seconds, someone in the world experiences a bone fracture due to osteoporosis. Your bones are, quite literally, the foundation for the rest of your life.

When your bone health is at risk, your entire life — from your career to your time with your family to your ability to do the hobbies and pastimes that you enjoy most — is at risk.

Don’t let osteoporosis keep you from living the life you want to live. Today, many new treatments can help keep your bones strong and help prevent fractures. Infusion medications are one of them.

Infusions and More: Modern Treatments for Osteoporosis

The right treatment for osteoporosis depends on many things, such as your age, lifestyle, and the factors that play into your osteoporosis journey, such as diet, medications, and gender. After a careful analysis, including a careful review of your osteoporosis risk factors, your doctor may suggest one or more treatments.

These include:

- **Estrogen agonists/antagonists**, which work like the hormone estrogen when it comes to protection of bone.
- **Synthetic forms of parathyroid hormone (PTH)**. PTH increases bone density and encourages new bone to grow, making it the only FDA-approved drug approved for this purpose.
- **Hormonal replacement therapy**, which is very effective at decreasing the risk of fractures.Alternative remedies, such as acupuncture (one study found that this needle-based treatment improved bone mineral density better than taking calcium) or traditional Chinese medicine.
- **Bisphosphonates**, a drug class that is one of the most commonly prescribed for osteoporosis. Besides slowing the rate at which bone is lost, for some people these medications may also reduce the bone pain that many people with osteoporosis experience.

The latter, bisphosphonates, is one of the oldest classes of medications used to treat osteoporosis. And these are the drugs used in so-called "infusions," meaning they're given sparingly over the course of months or years through intravenous treatments to help protect your bone health.

Infusions for Osteoporosis and How They Work

Osteoclasts are a type of bone cell that breaks down the tissue in your bone. In a healthy scenario, these bone cells are part of the regular maintenance and repair of your bones and are essential for regulating the level of calcium in your bones.

However, in osteoporosis, these "bone-eating cells" exacerbate the problem.

The main benefit of infusion for osteoporosis medications is that these infusions help to slow down the rate at which these bone cells break down and extract the calcium in your bones. The drugs essentially interfere with how the cells and enzymes break down your bones, preserving your bone strength and stopping the progression of osteoporosis.

The drugs are delivered as a fluid via an IV, hence the term “infusion.”

Depending on the specific bisphosphonates that you’re prescribed, your infusions may occur a few times a month, or just a few times a year.

Infusion for Osteoporosis Options

While there are many bisphosphonates on the market, there are only two infusion medications — medications that are infused directly into your body via an IV drip — that have been reviewed and approved by the U.S. government specifically for the treatment of bone loss and osteoporosis.

The first is the medication known as ibandronate, which is marketed under the trademark brand name of Boniva. These infusions are used four times a year, once every three months.

The other osteoporosis infusion is zoledronic acid, which is marketed under the name brand Reclast. This infusion happens just once every 12 months.

Your doctor can help you determine which infusion is best for your osteoporosis journey. There are a few key things to know about the two infusions, besides just how often they’re used.

1. **Timing**

Both infusions take a minimum of 15 minutes. It may take longer if you have other health concerns or complications, such as kidney problems.

2. **Options**

Both of these medications are available in pill form. In both cases, infusions are prescribed as an alternative to pills if the pill option isn’t the best for you.

3. **Supplementation**

Regardless of which option you take, infusions should be part of a greater comprehensive treatment plan prescribed by your doctor. For example, it’s very important that you continue to have the appropriate amount of vitamin D and calcium in your diet, either through whole foods or through supplements.

In most cases, before doing an infusion, your doctor will recommend blood tests to check both that your kidneys are working properly, but also that your levels of vitamin D and calcium are where they should be.

4. **Infusion Process**

Your doctor or medical professional will guide you through the process, including what to eat and drink before and after your treatments. Always consult your medical professional about preparations and risks. In general, it’s important to drink enough fluids before and after any IV treatment.

5. **Side Effects**

Depending on your current health, your medications and your infusion, common side effects can include nausea and dizziness. Thankfully, side effects are uncommon and for many people go away shortly after the infusion treatment.

If you’re curious about whether infusions are right for you, discuss this with your doctor today. Infusions aren’t for everyone, and their pros and cons vary widely depending on the progression of your osteoporosis, your age and health, and other factors. However, infusions can be a powerful tool in your doctor’s toolkit to help preserve and protect your bone health and your lifestyle.