Instructions for taking alendronate

(brand name Fosamax)

Dose: 35mg (one pill) once a week

Take the tablet in the morning when you wake up, with a glass of water. The glass should be at least 4 ounces (1/2 cup). Do not lie down again after taking the medicine.

Alendronate can cause damage to the esophagus (food pipe) and the water will wash the medication down into the stomach. If you lie down the medication might come back up into the esophagus, so that is why you should not lie down. You may sit or stand, but don't bend way over (no toe touching!)

Take the medication with plain water, NOT mineral water, coffee, tea, milk, or juice. Alendronate will attach to the minerals or the food and not get absorbed into your bloodstream.

It is OK to take most prescription medications along with the alendronate. The package insert says this should not be done but it was allowed in the FIT study and the medication still worked. Exceptions: antacids, calcium tablets, multiple vitamins that contain calcium or minerals, tetracycline, laxatives.

Do not eat anything for the next 30 minutes. This is to allow time for the alendronate to be absorbed.

On the days you take alendronate, take your calcium supplements in the afternoon and the evening, but not with breakfast.

Susan Ott, MD 10/28/05