

The Johns Hopkins Arthritis Center  
5501 Hopkins Bayview Circle  
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### **What is Zoledronic acid (Reclast®)?**

Zoledronic acid is used to treat or prevent osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a disease which causes bones to become thin. You are at risk for osteoporosis if you are:

|  |  |
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| Thin   | Do not exercise                        |
| Smoke  | Drink alcohol often                    |
| Caucasian  | Do not get enough calcium or vitamin D |
| Going through or past menopause                              | Have a family history of osteoporosis  |
| Take or have taken bone thinning medications like prednisone |  |

### **How do I take it?**

Zoledronic acid is given as an infusion (through a vein in your arm) lasting 15 minutes. You should drink 2 glasses of fluid at least one hour before receiving your infusion. You may eat normally before your infusion. Zoledronic acid infusions are once a year. The infusion must be administered by a health care professional.

You should not take Zoledronic acid if you are pregnant, breast feeding, have kidney problems, or have low blood calcium.

### **What about side effects?**

The most common side effects with the injection are bone, muscle and joint pains, flu like illness and headache. The flu like symptoms generally disappears after 24-48 hours and usually occurs only after the first injection. The most common side effects with the pill are diarrhea, pain in the extremities, and upset stomach. Less common side effects may be pain or trouble swallowing, heartburn and stomach ulcers.

Rarely patients have reported severe bone, joint and muscle pain that begins from 1 day to one month after starting any bisphosphonate, including Zoledronic acid. Most patients report relief from these symptoms after stopping the medication.

In rare cases some patients have experienced jaw problems when taking bisphosphonates including Zoledronic acid. This included delayed healing and infection.

### **What about other medications?**

Some medicines may cause low blood calcium levels or may harm your kidneys if taken with Zoledronic acids. Tell your doctor if you are taking Zometa, a diuretic or “water pill”, or an antibiotic. Take your calcium and vitamin D as recommended by your doctor.

### **What else should I know?**

Your doctor may order bone density tests to follow your osteoporosis. Contact your doctor if you have any questions about this or any of your medications. Contact your doctor if you experience any troubling side effects.