

Keeping Your Bones Healthy While Taking Aromatase Inhibitors

Patient Information



Why Have I Received This Leaflet?

You are receiving this leaflet because you are taking an **aromatase inhibitor (AI)** as part of your treatment. AIs are important medicines, but they can slightly increase the risk of **bone thinning (osteopenia)** and **osteoporosis**. Because of this, we review your bone health regularly. This may include calculating a **FRAX score** and, if needed, arranging a **DEXA scan** to assess your bone strength.

This leaflet explains:

- What osteoporosis is
 - Why people taking AIs are at higher risk
 - What you can do to protect your bones
 - What to expect next from Ascot Medical Centre
-

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis means “porous bones.” Healthy bones are strong and dense, with a natural honeycomb structure inside. As we age, we all lose some bone strength — this is normal.

With osteoporosis, the spaces in the bone’s inner structure become larger, making the bones weaker and more likely to break after a minor bump or fall.

Bone is **living tissue**, constantly being broken down and rebuilt by the body. Osteoporosis develops when more bone is lost than replaced.

Why do Aromatase Inhibitors Increase Bone Risk?

Aromatase inhibitors reduce the level of oestrogen in the body.

Oestrogen helps keep bones strong, so lower levels can lead to faster bone loss.

This means people taking AIs have a higher chance of developing osteoporosis compared to those not taking them.

That is why regular bone-health checks are important.

Who is at Risk of Osteoporosis?

Women

Women naturally have smaller bones, and bone loss speeds up after the menopause when oestrogen falls. Als lower oestrogen even further, increasing risk.

Men

Men have bigger bones and lose bone more slowly. However, low testosterone or certain long-term health conditions can increase risk.

Other Factors That Increase Risk (Men and Women)

- Long-term steroid tablets
- Family history of hip fracture (mother especially)
- Low body weight
- Smoking
- Drinking more than recommended alcohol limits
- Long periods of immobility
- Conditions affecting nutrient absorption (e.g., Crohn's disease, coeliac disease)

You cannot feel your bones getting thinner — many people only discover osteoporosis after a fracture, loss of height or a curved spine.

How Do We Check Bone Health?

1. FRAX Score

A FRAX score estimates your future risk of breaking a bone. It considers age, weight, medical history, family history, and medications. Ascot Medical Centre will contact you to complete this assessment.

2. DEXA Scan

If your FRAX score shows higher risk, we may arrange a DEXA scan. This is a simple, painless scan that takes about 10–15 minutes. It measures how strong your bones are and guides whether treatment is needed.

Looking After Your Bones

Healthy Diet

Aim for a balanced diet including:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Dairy products or fortified alternatives
- Whole grains
- Fish, eggs, beans, pulses, nuts and seeds

Calcium

Essential for bone strength. Good sources include:

- Milk, cheese, yoghurt
- Green leafy vegetables
- Tinned fish with soft bones (e.g., sardines)
- Baked beans, dried fruit

Vitamin D

Helps the body absorb calcium. You can get it from:

- Sunlight
- Oily fish
- Fortified foods

A supplement is often recommended, especially in winter.

Exercise

Regular **weight-bearing exercise** helps keep bones strong. Examples:

- Brisk walking
- Dancing
- Jogging
- Stair climbing

Aim for at least **20 minutes, three times a week.**

Lifestyle Changes

- **Stop smoking** – smoking harms bone health
- **Limit alcohol**
- Avoid very high caffeine or salt intake

Treatment Options

If osteoporosis or a high fracture risk is found, treatment may be recommended to strengthen the bones. Treatments may include:

- **Bisphosphonates**
- **Calcium and Vitamin D supplements**
- **Other medicines depending on your situation**

Your GP or specialist will discuss what is right for you.

What Happens Next?

Ascot Medical Centre will:

1. Invite you for a bone-health review
2. Complete a **FRAX score**
3. Arrange a **DEXA scan** if needed
4. Discuss results and treatment options with you

You are welcome to ask questions at any stage.

Contact Information – Ascot Medical Centre

If you have questions about your bone-health review or this leaflet, please contact:

Ascot Medical Centre

Brook House, Brook Ave, Ascot SL5 7GB

Tel: 01344 874011

If you require urgent medical advice, please contact NHS 111 or seek emergency care if necessary.

Ask 3 Questions

To help you make informed choices about your care, consider asking:

1. **What are my options?**
 2. **What are the benefits and risks of each option?**
 3. **How can I get help to make the decision that's right for me?**
-

Accessible Information

If you need this leaflet in:

- Large print
- Audio
- Braille
- Another language

Please contact Ascot Medical Centre reception and we will be happy to help.



