

# Osteonecrosis of the Jaw

The most serious Fosamax side effect is the development of a bone disease called [osteonecrosis of the jaw](#) (ONJ), or "dead jaw." Osteonecrosis of the jaw is a rare form of osteonecrosis affecting the maxillofacial region of the body.

The onset of [ONJ](#) is linked with the temporary or permanent loss of blood to bone tissue, leading to death of the tissue and the eventual collapse of the bone. There are approximately 10,000 to 20,000 new cases of osteonecrosis diagnosed each year in the United States, most of which occur as a result of some type of bone injury such as a fracture or dislocation.

In addition to being caused as a result of some type of trauma, instances of ONJ have also been caused as a result of using certain bisphosphonate drugs. Fosamax users run the risk of developing a serious case of osteonecrosis of the jaw and suffering through the extreme pain associated with the death of jawbone tissue. The pain associated with ONJ is said to be similar to that which is suffered by arthritis.

## Osteonecrosis of the Jaw Symptoms

There are a variety of osteonecrosis of the jaw symptoms that can help lead a doctor towards diagnosing a case of the rare bone disease. Oftentimes, ONJ may be asymptomatic throughout the early stages of disease development. It may take several weeks or months before a sufferer begins to experience some of the symptoms common to osteonecrosis of the jaw.

When ONJ symptoms develop, it is often the result of some type of dental work (like tooth extraction) that bares the jawbone and helps to accelerate symptomatic presentation. Common ONJ symptoms can include:

- Loose teeth
- Exposed bone
- Jaw / gum pain
- Jaw / gum swelling
- Jaw / gum infection
- Jaw numbness; loss of sensation
- Dramatic gum loss

Bisphosphonate (Fosamax, Actonel, Zometa, etc.) users displaying any of the aforementioned [ONJ symptoms](#) should consult with their doctor immediately. If a case of osteonecrosis of the jaw goes undetected or untreated, it can potentially lead to the death of bone tissue and irreversible joint collapse within the jaw.

## **Osteonecrosis of the Jaw and Bisphosphonates**

The development of osteonecrosis of the jaw has been linked with the use of certain bisphosphonate drugs, though the exact nature of the relationship is unknown. Some researchers have postulated that bisphosphonate drugs can prevent the formation of new blood vessels within jawbone tissue. Without being able to produce new blood vessels, the natural healing process of jawbone tissue is compromised, allowing for the degradation of bone mass.

Approximately 125 cases of osteonecrosis of the jaw have been linked with the use of some type of bisphosphonate drug. Many of the reported cases have been linked with pamidronate and zoledronate, though recent cases have increasingly been linked with alendronate (Fosamax).

## **Osteonecrosis of the Jaw - Diagnosis and Treatment**

Osteonecrosis of the jaw can typically be diagnosed through the use of various tomographic and panoramic imaging scans. On rare occasions, a bone tissue biopsy may be performed in order to rule out some type of metastatic disease; however, such a diagnostic surgery can potentially result in additional complications.

The earlier a case of [osteonecrosis](#) of the jaw is diagnosed, the more options a specialist will have in providing treatment. If ONJ goes undiagnosed and untreated, it can result in irreversible bone collapse leaving the sufferer disfigured.

There is no definitive way to treat ONJ. Antibiotic treatments can be administered to combat infections associated with the bone disease. Removable appliances can be manufactured to cover and protect any exposed sections of jawbone. In rare cases, small sections of necrotic tissue can be surgically removed, though the surgery is potentially fatal and can result in a patient's inability to chew solid food.

## **Osteonecrosis of the Jaw Legal Issues**

If you or a loved one has been injured as a result of developing a case of osteonecrosis of the jaw from the use of [Fosamax](#), you may be eligible to receive compensation for your pain and suffering. Contact a personal injury lawyer to get information on [Fosamax](#) victims' rights and get the proverbial "ball rolling" on your [Fosamax lawsuit](#).

MediaFact is an important online resource about drug side effects related to [Stevens Johnson Syndrome](#) and [Primary Pulmonary Hypertension](#).

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