

Link between long-term alendronic acid and femoral fractures

A potential link appears to exist between long-term alendronic acid use and low-energy fractures of the femur in postmenopausal women, according to results of a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

US-based researchers identified 15 postmenopausal women who had been receiving alendronic acid for a mean duration of 5.4 years and who presented with atypical low-energy fractures.* All women had subtrochanteric or proximal diaphyseal fractures.

Ten of the 15 women exhibited a unique 'simple with thick cortices' pattern in x-rays, defined as a simple oblique or transverse fracture with breaking of the cortex and diffuse cortical thickening of the proximal femoral shaft. Mean duration of alendronic acid use was significantly longer in these ten patients than in the remaining five patients who did not exhibit 'simple with thick cortices' pattern (7.3 vs 2.8 years). Three of the fifteen patients had a history of contralateral femoral fractures.

* Atypical low-energy fractures were defined as those occurring in a fall from a standing height or less.

Lenart BA, et al. Atypical fractures of the femoral diaphysis in postmenopausal women taking alendronate. *New England Journal of Medicine* 358: 1304-1306, No. 12, 20 Mar 2008

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