

XGEVA[®]

(denosumab)



Understanding bone metastases and XGEVA[®]



BIOTECHNOLOGY
BY **AMGEN**[®]

AMGEN[®]

Oncology

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The information provided in this booklet does not replace the advice of your doctor or other healthcare professionals. Always seek advice from your doctor or healthcare professional if you have questions regarding your medical condition or treatment.

■ About bone metastases

What are bone metastases and how do they affect my bones?

Cancer that spreads from its original site and starts to grow in other parts of the body is called a secondary or metastatic cancer. So rather than being a new form of cancer, bone metastases are actually a new growth of the original, or primary tumour.

Different cancers tend to spread, or metastasise, more easily to different parts of the body, and the bones are one of the most common sites. The spread occurs when cancer cells break away from a tumour and travel through the bloodstream, before lodging in the bone where they begin to grow. This process can occur in one or several bones and can take several years.

Bone metastases upset the normal balance of something called 'bone remodelling', where old bone is broken down and replaced with new bone. This means that bones affected by metastases can become weak and break more easily.

What are the possible consequences or complications of bone metastases?

Bone metastases can increase the risk of bone fractures or breaks. Bone pain is another common complication – in fact, it's often the first symptom of cancer that's spread to the bone. It's typically a dull, aching pain that usually strikes where the metastases are located, and while it often comes and goes at first, gradually the pain can become more constant.

Something called spinal cord compression can also occur if bone metastases cause damage to the bones in the spine. This damage puts pressure on the spinal cord nerves, which can lead to back pain as well as cause muscle and leg weakness, and it may even change how your bladder and bowel function.



How are the effects of bone metastases treated?

Bone pain can be treated using traditional cancer treatments, like chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormone therapy. The aim is to slow the growth of cancer cells and reduce bone damage.

Since this approach can take time to work and doesn't always stop the pain completely, pain medication is often prescribed as well. Oral medication is usually prescribed first, and two or more drugs are often used together.

There are a number of ways to treat spinal cord compression, depending on the severity or stage of the problem. Radiation and corticosteroids are often used if the cancer has only just started to press on the spinal cord, but in cases where compression has already occurred, immediate surgery backed up by a course of radiation is often advised.

For other complications, including fractures, the best approach is to try to prevent these from happening in the first place – keep reading for more information.

How can I protect my bones from a complication?

Continuing to receive XGEVA® injections as prescribed by your doctor is a good place to start, because XGEVA® can help prevent or delay fractures. It can also help prevent pressure on the spinal cord or the need to receive radiation therapy or undergo surgery.

Preventing falls, which can cause fractures, is also important. Effective ways to do this include fall-proofing your home and environment, wearing comfortable shoes with slip-resistant soles, and having your eyes tested annually.



About XGEVA®

What does XGEVA® do?

XGEVA® slows down the bone destruction that occurs as a result of bone metastases, where cancer has spread to the bone. By doing this, it helps to prevent serious complications like bone fractures and spinal cord compression, and may also reduce the need for radiation therapy or surgery.

Why has my doctor prescribed XGEVA®?

Research shows that having a fracture can significantly impact your quality of life, affecting everything from your physical mobility to how socially active you are, and even how well you can carry out simple, everyday tasks. So, preventing fractures, rather than trying to treat and deal with the after-effects, is the best approach.

How will I be given XGEVA®?

XGEVA® dose is 120 mg, administered once every 4 weeks as a single injection under the skin. This is called a subcutaneous injection. Your doctor or nurse will give you the injection.

You should also take calcium and vitamin D supplements while receiving XGEVA®. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will discuss this with you.

Where on my body will I be injected?

XGEVA® will be injected into your thigh, abdomen or upper arm. You'll receive a single injection each time.

How often will I need an XGEVA® injection, and for how long?

XGEVA® is injected once every four weeks. There is no limit as to how long you will be prescribed XGEVA®, therefore you should continue treatment for as long as your doctor recommends.



What if I miss an XGEVA® dose?

It's important to have XGEVA® as prescribed by your doctor, so if you miss an injection, arrange to have it as soon as possible. And once you've had it, make sure you schedule your next injection for four weeks after this date.

How will I know if XGEVA® is working?

Your doctor may recommend that you occasionally have some tests. These may include blood or urine tests, and x-rays or bone scans, to check how well XGEVA® is working for you.

Should I be worried about the side effects of XGEVA®?

All medicines can produce some unwanted side effects, and while some are serious, most aren't. In prescribing XGEVA®, your doctor has weighed up the potential risks against the benefits, and has decided it's an appropriate medicine for you.

You can read more about some of the most common side effects in the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet which you can request from your pharmacist. You'll also find some tips to help you deal with some of these side effects on page 8 of this booklet. As a general rule, tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you don't feel well when you're receiving XGEVA®.

If you experience more severe symptoms such as the following, tell your doctor immediately as they may be serious side effects. Persistent pain in your jaw and/or sores that don't heal in your mouth may indicate the development of jaw problems. Muscle spasms and/or numbness or tingling in your fingers, toes or around your mouth may indicate you have low levels of calcium in your blood (hypocalcaemia).

If you experience a serious allergic reaction to XGEVA®, you may need to seek urgent medical attention or hospitalisation. Some symptoms of an allergic reaction may include: shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other parts of the body; rash, itching or hives. If any of these symptoms occurs, contact your doctor immediately.

Maintaining good dental hygiene is important in helping prevent jaw problems when you're receiving XGEVA®, so brush your teeth and tongue after every meal and floss gently once a day to remove plaque. You will also need to have a dental check-up every six months. Always tell or remind your dentist about your XGEVA® treatment at every visit or before a dental procedure.

You should take calcium and vitamin D supplements while receiving XGEVA®. If hypocalcaemia (low levels of calcium) occurs you may need additional short term calcium supplements. Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions.

What should I keep in mind while I'm on XGEVA®?

While you are being treated with XGEVA®, it is essential you tell or remind your healthcare team of this before you start taking any other medication. And if you see a different doctor at any stage, always tell them too.

Take calcium and vitamin D supplements if your doctor has advised you to. Most people do not get enough calcium and vitamin D in their diet, therefore supplements are strongly recommended.

Don't be tempted to stop XGEVA® treatment without first discussing it with your doctor.

How do I store XGEVA®?

XGEVA® should be kept in its carton to protect it from light, and stored in the fridge, between 2°C and 8°C. To make the injection more comfortable, your XGEVA® may be left outside of the fridge to reach room temperature, as long as it's no higher than 25°C. Just remember that once XGEVA® has been taken out of the fridge, it must be used within 30 days and must be kept below 25°C. However, it's important not to put it back in the fridge once it's been taken out.

Where can I find out more about XGEVA®?

If you have questions about XGEVA®, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, or see the XGEVA® CMI leaflet.

Dealing with common side effects of XGEVA®

Some of the common, mild side effects reported by people receiving XGEVA® include nausea, fatigue and back pain. If you regularly experience one or more of them and feel concerned, talk to your doctor. Contact Amgen Medical Information on 1800 803 638 for more information on XGEVA® or to report any side effects. You can read about other possible side effects in the XGEVA® CMI leaflet.

The following tips may also help you manage each side effect more effectively:

For nausea

- Avoiding food completely can make nausea worse, so try to eat small meals often instead.
- Sour or salty foods and fizzy drinks can help, such as dry crackers, potato crisps and lemon-flavoured drinks.
- Cold foods, like salads and cold meats, can be easier to stomach than fried, greasy or spicy meals.
- Steer clear of strong-smelling food and cooking odours, as these can make nausea worse.
- Take your time when eating and drinking, and always chew your food well.
- When planning your day, include some rest times. Try taking several shorter naps or breaks rather than one longer one.
- Stick to a healthy diet, which can help boost your energy levels, and make sure you drink plenty of fluids.
- Consider whether you have low iron levels (anaemia). This condition can cause fatigue. Talk to your doctor for more information.

For back pain

- Heat packs provide relief for some people, while others find ice packs work best.
- Over-the-counter painkillers can help. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you choose an appropriate one for you.

For fatigue

- Physical activity can help increase energy levels, so try to get some gentle exercise if you feel up to it. Always first check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.

FAQs about living with bone metastases

Q What else can I do to help maintain my bone strength — and prevent falls?

Exercise can help improve or maintain bone mineral density. While moderate physical activity is still recommended for people living with bone metastases, avoid high-impact activities like running, and always talk to your doctor before you begin any exercise program. Exercises that improve balance, strength and flexibility, like tai chi, can also help prevent falls.

Q How should I talk to my loved ones about my health?

While how and what you talk about will depend on your relationship with each person, being open about health issues can help some people better cope. Consider letting your friends and family know how they can support you, or think about including them in treatment decisions. Your loved ones may want to follow your lead, so it might be up to you to make the first move.

Q Where can I find out more about preventing — falls in my home?

The *HomeFront guide to preventing falls for older people* contains a range of practical tips. You can download it from www.dva.gov.au

Q Should I be worried about becoming addicted to pain medication?

Addiction is rarely a problem when pain medication is used as directed. It's important not to let a fear of addiction interfere with taking your medicine as prescribed by your doctor.

Q Apart from taking medication, what else can I do to manage my pain?

There are a number of things you can do that might help you cope with pain, including breathing and relaxation methods, meditation and hypnotherapy. Other techniques, like acupuncture, may help ease chronic pain. Remember to always first talk to your doctor before trying anything new.



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XGEVA[®]

(denosumab)

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