

PATIENT INFORMATION ON

STRONTIUM

(Brand name: Protos)

This information sheet has been produced by the Australian Rheumatology Association to help you understand the medicine that has been prescribed for you. It includes important information about:

- **How you should take your medicine;**
- **The possible side effects; and**
- **Other precautions you should take while taking strontium.**

Please read it carefully and discuss with your doctor.

What is strontium?

Strontium (brand name Protos) is a medicine used to treat osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a common disease, which causes bones to become fragile and brittle so that they break (fracture) more easily even as a result of normal activity (as distinct from a fall).

Fractures are painful and restrict a person's ability to carry out their normal daily tasks. Strontium reduces the risk of a broken bone or fracture. This medicine consists of a specific type of 'salt' containing strontium, which is an element found naturally in water, food and in trace amounts in the body.

How does it work?

Bone is constantly changing, with old bone breaking down and new bone being formed to take its place. This usually happens in a balanced way.

If the cycle becomes unbalanced, bone breaks down faster than it is replaced. This leads to osteoporosis.

Strontium is a medicine that slows or stops the bone breaking down. It may also increase bone formation. As a result, bone strength increases and the risk of fracture is reduced.

For more information about OSTEOPOROSIS see the Arthritis Australia website
www.arthritisaustralia.com.au/index.php/arthritis-information/information-sheets.html

What benefit can you expect from your treatment?

Since osteoporosis is usually not painful (until a fracture occurs) you will not 'feel' any immediate benefit from your treatment with strontium.

You may be asked to have tests to check the effect of treatment on your bones. For example, a bone mineral density test is usually done after one to two years of treatment. This is a type of x-ray, which involves a very small amount of radiation.

Tests of urine or blood are also sometimes used to measure the effects of treatment on bone formation and breakdown.

How is strontium taken?

Strontium is a powder, which comes in single dose sachets and needs to be mixed

with water before you take it. To make sure it is effective, it is very important that you follow the instructions carefully:

- Empty the powder from the sachet into a glass.
- Add at least 30mls of water (about one third of a standard glass).
- Stir the powder until it is evenly mixed in the water. This should take only a few seconds.
- Drink the mixture straight away. If you do not drink it straight away, make sure you stir it again before drinking.
- Do not leave this mixture for more than 24 hours before you take it.

What is the dosage and when should it be taken?

Strontium comes in 2 gram sachets. The dose is one sachet every day. It should be taken on an empty stomach, at least two hours after eating. The best time to take it is at night before going to bed.

Can other medicines be taken with strontium?

It is safe to take most medicines when you are taking strontium (see *Precautions* on page 3).

Your doctor will usually recommend that you take calcium and possibly vitamin D as further treatment for osteoporosis. If you are taking medicines containing calcium, you should not take your strontium within 2 hours of taking these medicines

How long is the treatment continued?

For osteoporosis, treatment with strontium is usually given for a number of years. Your doctor will review your progress each year. Once you have had one fracture your chance of having another one is quite high so it is important to keep taking the medicine.

Are there any side effects?

Most people who take strontium do not experience side effects. Below are some side effects that you might experience with your treatment. Tell your doctor if you experience any problems. A reduction in

dose or change to another medicine may minimise the side effects so that you can continue to have treatment for your bones.

Tell your doctor if you experience any side effects.

Most common possible side effects:

- *Stomach upset* including nausea and diarrhoea.
- *Headache*.
- *Skin irritation*.

Less common or rare possible side effects:

- *Blood clot* in a vein is rare. Contact your doctor immediately if you experience pain or swelling in your legs or a sudden shortness of breath.
- A very rare but *serious reaction* of skin rash, fever, swollen glands, high numbers of white cells in the blood and effects on the liver, kidneys and lungs can occur within 3 to 6 weeks of the initiation of the treatment.
- There are also a number of other uncommon side effects so you should read the leaflet that comes with the sachet as it will list all the cautions and possible side effects.

What precautions are necessary?

Blood tests:

- Monitoring blood tests are not usually required for people taking strontium, although in certain situations these may be needed.

