



# Osteoporosis: patient compliance with medicines essential

## Osteoporosis greatly impacts the lives of older Australians

- 1.2 million Australians have osteoporosis and over 6 million Australians<sup>1</sup> have osteopenia or low bone density. As the population ages, the incidence of osteoporosis will increase<sup>2</sup>.
- Osteoporosis is a life-long disease and once diagnosed most patients will need long-term continuous medication in order to lower their risk of fracture<sup>3</sup>.
- A minor fall, twist of the back or even bumping into something can be enough to cause a fracture in patients with osteoporosis<sup>4</sup>.
- Fractures can lead to chronic pain, a loss of independence, disability and even premature death<sup>2</sup>.
- Managing the bone health of patients with osteoporosis to avoid fractures should be a clinical priority<sup>4</sup>.

## Patients are being diagnosed, but are not taking their medication

- Once diagnosed, prescribed medicines play an essential role in the management of osteoporosis<sup>3</sup>. These medicines are proven to prevent further bone loss, and in many cases, make bones stronger<sup>3</sup>.
- Despite these benefits, because bones are hidden and osteoporosis is typically asymptomatic, patients tend to not understand or see how the medication is working and therefore discontinue treatment<sup>3</sup>.
- Compliance with osteoporosis medications is poor, despite adherence reducing the rate of fractures<sup>5</sup>.
- Less than 25% of patients exceed 12 months without stopping therapy<sup>5</sup>.

## Osteoporosis medication compliance is essential in order to prevent fractures

- Clinical evidence demonstrates compliance reduces the rate of fracture<sup>3</sup>.
- One study on hip and vertebral fractures reports a decrease of 60% in the risk of hip fracture at 12 months in patients who persisted in taking their medication compared to those who did not<sup>3</sup>.



## Tips for helping patients better adhere to their medications

- It is important to talk regularly with patients about how to protect their bone health by taking their medications as prescribed, in addition to other healthy lifestyle habits.
- The following tips for patients may help increase medication compliance and prevent fractures:

1. **Set a diary note to take your medication**
2. **Ensure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D**
3. **Stay active. Exercise can maintain or increase bone strength**
4. **Keep a journal on your overall health and wellness and jot down any aches or pains**
5. **See your GP regularly**

## References

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