What is osteoporosis?
Osteoporosis is a condition that causes a reduction in a person’s bone density (amount of bone tissue). As such, the bones become thinner, more porous & fragile. This condition leads to an increased risk of broken bone or fracture.

How does it work?
Etidronate in combination with calcium is taken to help prevent osteoporosis & to also treat osteoporosis in
- people on cortisone therapy for 3 months or longer
- post menopausal women with low bone mineral density
- men with low bone mineral density

Etidronate binds to the surfaces of bones to slow down bone removing cells, which allows bone-forming cells to rebuild bone. This process helps to increase the strength and amount of bone in the body. Calcium is also taken daily to help harden new bone.

How quickly does it work?
You will not feel any effects in your bones from taking etidronate. Your doctor will monitor your response to treatment with another bone mineral density test 1 – 2 years after starting therapy.

How do I take it?
Didrocal:
- etidronate 400 mg taken daily for 14 days every 3 months followed by
- elemental calcium carbonate 500 mg daily for 76 days
How much calcium & vitamin D do I need?

Didronel:
- etidronate 400 mg tablet is taken for 14 days every 3 months
- no calcium is supplied with this medication

Etidronate:
- is taken on an empty stomach at bedtime at least 2 hours before or after eating or drinking
- Take with a full glass of water.
- Do not take within 2 hours of taking food high in calcium (milk products), medications such as antacids, laxatives or vitamins & mineral supplements that contain calcium, magnesium, iron or aluminum.

If you forget to take etidronate at your usual time of the day, skip the dose & take your usual dose the next day.

Take your medication as advised by your doctor.
- Work with your doctor to decide how much medication you need to take. Taking more medication than is needed increases your risk of side effects. Skipping doses of medication will reduce how well it will work in your body to control your condition.

Calcium & Vitamin D requirements:
- It is extremely important that an adequate amount of calcium & vitamin D is taken daily to get the full benefit of the etidronate that you are taking & prevent any side effects of the medication.

- Recommended total daily requirements:
  - elemental calcium 1200 mg and vitamin D₃ 800 – 2000 IU if you are: - over 50 years of age or
    - postmenopausal or
    - on cortisone therapy

- The total daily dose of elemental calcium & vitamin D should be obtained from both food sources and dietary supplements as needed

- It is advised that in addition to your diet you take the
following supplements:
Calcium (carbonate/citrate) ____________ mg
Vitamin D3 ____________ IU

- Calcium carbonate supplied with your Didrocal prescription should be taken with food to enhance absorption.

**What tests are needed?**

**Bone mineral test:** is generally done initially to establish the state of your bones & is repeated every 1 - 2 years to monitor how well the medicine is working.

**What are the possible side effects?**

**Possible mild side effects:**
- Etidronate may cause stomach problems such as nausea & diarrhea
- Calcium carbonate may cause constipation

**Possible rare side effects:**
- Etidronate may cause
  - stomach pain, bloating, flatulence, constipation & vomiting
  - joint pain
  - burning in throat
  - hives, skin rash, itching, swelling,
  - hair loss
  - headache
  - confusion or depression

**What if I have a side effect?**

Contact your doctor or nurse if you develop any symptoms:
- Side effects can occur anytime during treatment and are usually temporary.

**Precautions?**

Etidronate should not be taken if you
- are planning pregnancy, pregnant or breast feeding
- have advanced kidney disease
- have low blood levels of calcium
- If taking warfarin (an anticoagulant), your prothrombin time
What if I get sick?

• If illness occurs while taking your course of etidronate, stop if unable to tolerate, and continue taking when you feel better.

Surgery, dental work or other procedures:

• Since etidronate is only taken for 2 weeks every 3 months, the medication can be arranged to taken either before or after the surgery.

• Keep medication in the original container and tightly closed.

• Keep in a cool cupboard, & not in your bathroom as it is a warm, moist environment.

How often do I see my doctor?

1. See your rheumatologist after starting the medication as advised.

2. Keep a diary.
   As a reminder, record when your take your medications & any reasons for changes or withdrawal of medications.

3. Keep a medication list in your wallet.
   Record all medications, vitamin/mineral & herbal supplements you are presently taking & any allergies you may have.
   Bring this list to all medical appointments with your doctor, nurse and other health care providers.

Disclaimer:

This information does not replace medical advice. Specific questions about medications should be discussed with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.