

the bottom line

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Bisphosphonates Now Linked to Lower Risk for Colorectal Cancer

January 27, 2011 (San Francisco, California) — Taking bisphosphonates for osteoporosis for more than a year is associated with a reduced risk for colorectal cancer, according to a new study from the same Israeli group that reported a reduced risk for breast cancer.

"The use of oral bisphosphonates for more than 1 year was associated with a 60% relative reduction in the risk of colorectal cancer, similar to the recently reported association of this drug class with reduction in breast cancer risk," Dr. Rennert and colleagues told the meeting.

The results come from a population-based case-control study of colorectal cancer — the Molecular Epidemiology of Colorectal Cancer — conducted in northern Israel. The data on bisphosphonate use were collected from a subset of 933 postmenopausal women with colorectal cancer and 933 control subjects (matched for age, religion, and residence) from the Clalit Health Services, using computerized pharmacy controls.

Bisphosphonate use was recorded in 97 patients and 138 control subjects, Dr. Rennert reported. "But our finding is for [those who have used] bisphosphonates for more than 1 year," he explained (53 of 933 women with colon cancer and 100 of 933 control women; $P < .001$ in univariate analysis).

The use of bisphosphonates for more than 1 year prior to the diagnosis of colorectal cancer, but not for less than a year, was associated with a significantly reduced risk for colorectal cancer (odds ratio, 0.50; 95% confidence interval, 0.35 to 0.71).

This association remained statistically significant after adjustment for vegetable consumption, sports activity, family history of colorectal cancer, body mass index, and use of low-dose aspirin, statins, vitamin D, and hormone replacement therapy, the researchers note. Concomitant use of bisphosphonates and statins did not reduce the risk any further.

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