

Phosphate Binders

Calcium acetate, calcium carbonate (Tums, Calsan, Apocal, Ocal), calcium liquid, aluminum hydroxide (Basaljel, Amphojel), sevelamer (Renvela), lanthanum (Fosrenol)



What it does:

Phosphate binders are used to treat high blood phosphorus levels.

Calcium acetate, calcium carbonate, calcium liquid, aluminum hydroxide, lanthanum and sevelamer bind dietary phosphate. When the kidneys fail, phosphorus builds up in the body because the kidneys can no longer remove much phosphorus. Phosphate binders are used to lower the amount of phosphorus absorbed from food to limit development of bone and blood vessel disease.

Aluminum hydroxide and calcium carbonate may also be prescribed as antacids. Calcium preparations may also be prescribed as calcium supplements. Use them only as prescribed. When these medications are prescribed as calcium supplements or antacids, take between meals.

How it works:

Kidney disease can cause phosphate to accumulate which results in bone and blood vessel disease. Phosphate binders work in the intestine to bind the phosphorus from foods, causing the phosphorus to be removed in the stool rather than being absorbed into the blood.

How to take it:

If your doctor prescribed aluminum hydroxide, calcium acetate, calcium carbonate, calcium liquid or sevelamer as a phosphate binder, take it just before eating so that it can bind the phosphorus in the food. If you forget to take it with a meal, it is still helpful to take it up to 30 minutes after a meal.

Special considerations for lanthanum and sevelamer:

Lanthanum should be taken during or immediately after a meal. Taking a dose on an empty stomach can cause nausea and vomiting. Chew the tablet completely before swallowing. DO NOT swallow tablets whole.

Sevelamer should be taken just before eating. Swallow the tablet whole – Renvela should not be cut or chewed. The contents of sevelamer tablets expand in water and could cause choking if cut chewed or crushed.

Phosphate binders may interfere with the absorption of certain drugs such as iron supplements, antibiotics, digoxin, ranitidine, antiseizure, and antiarrhythmic medications. If you are prescribed any of these drugs, take them at least 1 hour before or 3 hours after your phosphate binder.

What to do if you miss a dose:

If you forget to take your phosphorus binders and it is within 30 minutes of eating, take your usual dose. If it is more than 30 minutes since you ate then skip the dose. **DO NOT double your next dose.**

Possible side effects:

Constipation, diarrhea, intestinal gas and/or stomach discomfort may occur. If you have problems with constipation, contact your doctor regarding a stool softener or other laxative. Contact your doctor if you experience mood or mental changes, bone pain, muscle weakness, tiredness or weight loss.

Relation to diet:

Ask to speak to your dietitian about food sources of phosphorus, in particular phosphorus additives that come from prepared and processed foods.