



Hormonal Therapy: Patient Questions

Treatment for breast cancer may include a type of medication commonly called hormonal therapy. Cancer's growth can often be controlled by hormonal medications if your cancer has receptors on the surface of the cell that allows hormones to stimulate its growth. If your cancer has tested positive for estrogen or progesterone receptors, you may receive a hormonal medication as part of your treatment plan.

In the past, physicians would remove the ovaries (major source of estrogen and progesterone) in premenopausal women and the adrenal glands (major source of production hormone production) in postmenopausal women to block their normal hormones from influencing the cancer's growth.

Today there are a number of drugs that block hormone production or prevent hormonal stimulation to the breast. Each drug has a different way of blocking estrogen and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Most Common Breast Cancer Hormonal Therapies:

<u>Brand Name</u>	<u>Generic Name</u>
Arimidex®	anastrozole
Aromasin®	exemestane
Fareston®	toremifene
Faslodex®	fulvestrant
Femara®	letrozole
Megace®	megesterol
Nolvadex®	tamoxifen
Fareston®	toremifene

Your physician will determine which drug is the best treatment for you. These drugs are used when women have positive ER/PR receptor tests that are performed on the tumor at diagnosis. Whether you are pre- or post-menopausal will also determine the drug that will be prescribed.

The good news about hormonal therapy is that the side effects are minimal compared to chemotherapy. There is no hair loss or nausea and vomiting. They do not kill cancer cells; instead, they block the stimulating effect of hormones on the growth of the cancer. The major side effects of Tamoxifen, the most commonly used drug for many years, are hot flashes and mood swings. Each drug your physician orders will have a unique component to the control of your cancer. Your healthcare provider will explain the way the drug works and the expected side effects.

Questions about hormonal drugs:

- What is the name of the drug(s) I will be prescribed?

- How long will I take the medication(s)?

- What are the advantages of this drug?

- What are the expected side effects?

- What side effects should I report to you after I start the medication(s)?

Additional Information:
