

Hormone Therapy: Which is Right for You?

Because you have been diagnosed with hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer, your doctor has suggested that you take hormone therapy. You will take a drug called an Aromatase Inhibitor (AI), or tamoxifen (Nolvadex®).

There are three aromatase inhibitors:

- Anastrozole (Arimidex®)
- Exemestane (Aromasin®)
- Letrozole (Femara®)

To help you better understand the side effects of each drug, we've given you a table comparing the side effects of tamoxifen and AIs. Please take a look at the table below and talk to your health care provider if you have any questions.

Side Effect	Tamoxifen	Why?	Aromatase Inhibitor (AI)	Why?
Hot Flashes	Common (40%)	The drug is preventing estrogen uptake	Common (40%)	All of these side effects occur because the drug is preventing estrogen production
Osteoporosis	Reduced	The drug is acting as an estrogen in bone	Increased	
Increased clotting (blood clots in legs, stroke)	Increased by: 2-3 fold	The drug is acting as an estrogen	Not increased	
Aches in joints and bones	Increased (15-25%)	The drug is preventing estrogen uptake	Increased (45%)	
Uterine thickening and Uterine Cancer	Increased by: 2-3 fold	The drug is acting as an estrogen	Not increased	
Vaginal dryness and sexual problems	Increased	The drug is preventing estrogen uptake	Increased	

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Daniel F. Hayes, MD
Reviewers: Kelly Scheu, NP and Joan Armstrong, NP

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Document #0220/Last Revised: 1/2015