



Hot Flashes from Endocrine Therapy

What are hot flashes?

- Hot flashes are sudden feelings of heat with or without sweating. These episodes go away after a few minutes, and may recur.
- You may experience palpitations or anxiety with hot flashes.
- After a hot flash you may also have chills.

What is endocrine therapy?

Tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitor medicines are used to either block the use of estrogen or lower the estrogen level in the body. This group of medications is called endocrine therapy. Other names for the endocrine therapy are: hormonal therapy, hormone therapy, and hormone treatment.

What causes hot flashes?

- Lower levels of estrogen may cause changes in your body's ability to regulate temperature and that leads to episodes of flushing and sweating.
- Medications to treat breast cancer often cause a reduction in the level of estrogen in the body.

How common are hot flashes from endocrine therapy?

- Between 20-40 patients out of 100 (approximately 20-40%) experience hot flashes after starting endocrine therapy.
- Hot flashes may decrease over time on the medication.
- Several conditions and behaviors increase the risk for having hot flashes.

These include:

- History of estrogen replacement therapy
- History of hot flashes during menopause in postmenopausal women,
- Premature menopause at a young age

- Obesity
- Smoking

These conditions or behaviors increase the risk for having more severe and more frequent hot flashes while taking endocrine therapy.

What should I do if I have hot flashes?

Let your breast oncology team know that you are having hot flashes at your next visit. If your hot flashes are very bothersome, call the breast oncology clinic and speak to a nurse or oncologist about your symptoms.

What are common treatments for hot flashes?

Treatments for hot flashes include life style changes and/or medications that treat these symptoms. Speak with your oncologist before starting any medications for the treatment of hot flashes.

- Life style changes include:
 - dressing in layers
 - using fans or cooling aids
 - using cotton clothing and bedding
 - reducing alcohol, smoking and caffeine

If your symptoms are severe, talk with your doctor about medications to help with hot flashes. These include:

- Antidepressants, including citalopram and venlafaxine
- Oxybutynin
- Gabapentin
- Clonidine
- Megestrol (in male patients)
- Some studies also suggest that relaxation techniques and hypnosis may help with hot flashes. Discuss these options with your breast cancer team.

Do not stop taking your endocrine therapy before you speak with your oncologist. Please speak with your breast cancer team about ways to manage your hot flashes before stopping endocrine therapy.

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