

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Aromatase Inhibitors



What are Aromatase Inhibitors?

- Aromatase inhibitors are used for the treatment of breast cancer.
- Medications in this medicine class include Anastrozole, Letrozole and Exemestane.

How are Aromatase Inhibitors Administered/Taken?

- Aromatase inhibitors should be taken once a day, preferably at the same time daily with or without food.
- The tablet should be swallowed whole. Do not chew or crush the capsules. Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you have difficulty swallowing
- If you miss a dose of aromatase inhibitors, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is more than 12 hours of the missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing time.

Can Aromatase Inhibitors be Taken With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicines or supplements.

What are the Important Side Effects of Aromatase Inhibitors?

- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Hot flushes (sudden sweating and feeling of warmth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are experiencing hot flushes, wearing light clothing, staying in a cool environment, and putting cool cloths on your head may reduce symptoms. • Inform your doctor if these symptoms affect you significantly.

Side Effect	Management
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take small, frequent meals. • Avoid smells that precipitate nausea. • Take medicines for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor. • Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.
Hair thinning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may experience hair thinning. However, your hair will grow back once you have stopped treatment with aromatase inhibitors. Color and texture may change.
Muscle aches and joint pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild pain can be relieved by taking Paracetamol (Panadol ®). • Inform your doctor if pain is not controlled by Paracetamol (Panadol ®). • Taking regular warm baths may also help.
Fluid retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may experience swelling of hands, feet, or lower legs if your body retains extra fluids. • Elevating your legs on a foot stool or with a cushion or pillow may help to reduce the swelling.
Vaginal itching, dryness, discomfort, bleeding or vaginal discharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These will subside when treatment is completed. However, inform your doctor early if these symptoms affect you significantly. • You may experience vaginal bleeding in the first few weeks after starting aromatase inhibitors. If the bleeding continues, inform your doctor.

Side Effect	Management
Bone loss and fractures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bone loss may occur over time. Maintain sufficient calcium and vitamin D intake. • Your doctor will monitor your bone density and start therapy when required.
Increase in cholesterol or triglycerides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have your cholesterol level checked before starting aromatase inhibitor, and periodically after starting.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.

What Else Can I do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise
Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Avoid strenuous exercise, and rest when you are feeling tired.
- Stay positive
Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.
- Adequate hydration
Maintain adequate hydration with 2 to 3 litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of getting constipation and also prevent dehydration.
- Medical and dental treatment
Always inform your dentist / doctor that you are taking aromatase inhibitors.

How do I Store Aromatase Inhibitors?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

