



BC Cancer Agency

For the Patient: Anastrozole

Other names: ARIMIDEX®

- **Anastrozole** (an-ASS-troh-zole) is a drug that is used to treat breast cancer. It only works in women who are post-menopausal and producing estrogen outside the ovaries. Many cancers are hormone sensitive (estrogen or progesterone receptor positive) and their growth can be affected by lowering estrogen levels in the body. Anastrozole is used to help reduce the amount of estrogen produced by your body and decrease the growth of hormone sensitive tumors. Anastrozole is a tablet that you take by mouth.
- It is important to **take** anastrozole exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Anastrozole may be taken with food or on an empty stomach with a glass of water or juice.
- If you **miss a dose** of anastrozole, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.
- **Store** anastrozole tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.
- Other drugs may **interact** with anastrozole. Tell your doctor if you are taking other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- Because anastrozole works by reducing the amount of estrogen produced by your body, it is recommended that you avoid taking estrogen replacement therapy such as conjugated estrogens (PREMARIN®, C.E.S.®, ESTRACE®, ESTRACOMB®, ESTRADERM®, ESTRING®).
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of anastrozole.
- Anastrozole has lactose in it. The amount is very small but may rarely cause some gastric upset in persons who are lactose intolerant.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with anastrozole before you receive any treatment from them.
- Anastrozole is **usually well tolerated** and serious side effects are rare.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Nausea (upset stomach) may occur when you first start taking anastrozole. This usually improves as your body adjusts to anastrozole. Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>If nausea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your anastrozole after eating. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Control Nausea</i>.
<p>Hot flashes (sudden sweating and feelings of warmth) can sometimes occur when you first start taking anastrozole. This usually improves as your body adjusts to anastrozole.</p>	<p>If hot flashes are troublesome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your anastrozole at bedtime. • If night sweats interfere with sleep, try taking anastrozole in the morning. • Some people find it helpful by avoiding alcohol, spicy food, caffeine intake (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate). • Follow a regular exercise program. • Try staying in a cool environment • Wear layers so that if you do experience a hot flash, the outer layers may be removed. • Ask your doctor for more advice if your hot flashes continue to bother you. There may be medications available.
<p>Muscle or joint pain may occur a few days after your treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may take acetaminophen (eg, TYLENOL®) or ibuprofen (eg, ADVIL®) for mild to moderate pain. Tell your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.
<p>Headache may occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may take acetaminophen (eg, TYLENOL®) or ibuprofen (eg, ADVIL®) to decrease or stop headache.
<p>Swelling of hands, feet or lower legs may occur if your body retains extra fluid.</p>	<p>If swelling is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your feet when sitting. • Avoid tight clothing. • Tell your doctor if this continues to bother you.
<p>Hair loss is rare with anastrozole. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with anastrozole. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.
<p>Bone loss (osteoporosis) may occur over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For dietary and lifestyle modifications to help prevent osteoporosis, refer to <i>Patient Guidelines for the Prevention of Osteoporosis in Women</i>.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Increase in cholesterol or triglycerides may occur</p>	<p>Discuss this with your doctor if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A history of heart disease. • High blood pressure. • Elevated triglycerides. <p>You may need to have your cholesterol level checked a few months after starting anastrozole.</p>

STOP TAKING ANASTROZOLE AND SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain or shortness of breath.

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, constipation or diarrhea.
- Hot flashes that are troublesome.
- Vaginal bleeding, discomfort or discharge.
- Excessive swelling of hands, feet or lower legs.
- Headache not controlled with acetaminophen.
- Skin rash.
- Depression.
- Significant weight gain.
- Significant persisting aches and pains.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR
