

**For the Patient: Exemestane**

Other names: Aromasin®

- **Exemestane** (ex-uh-MESS-tane) 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. Exemestane is used to help reduce the amount of estrogen produced by your body and decrease the growth of hormone sensitive tumors. Exemestane is a tablet that you take by mouth.
- It is important to **take** exemestane exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Exemestane may be taken with food or on an empty stomach.
- If you **miss a dose** of exemestane, 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** exemestane tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.
- Other drugs may **interact** with exemestane. 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 exemestane 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 exemestane.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with exemestane before you receive any treatment from them.
- Exemestane 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 exemestane. This should improve as your body adjusts to the exemestane. Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>If nausea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your exemestane after eating. • Try the ideas in Food Choices to Help Control Nausea.*
<p>Hot flashes (sudden sweating and feelings of warmth) can sometimes occur when you first start taking exemestane. This usually improves as your body adjusts to exemestane.</p>	<p>If hot flashes are troublesome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try taking your exemestane at bedtime. • If night sweats interfere with sleep, try taking exemestane 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 (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day or ibuprofen (e.g., 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®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day 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>Tiredness and lack of energy may occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try the ideas in Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue.*
<p>You may have trouble sleeping.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Hair loss is rare with exemestane. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with exemestane. Colour and texture may change.	<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.
Bone loss (osteoporosis) may occur over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For dietary and lifestyle modifications to help prevent osteoporosis, refer to Patient Guidelines for the Prevention of Osteoporosis in Women *
Increase in cholesterol or triglycerides may occur	<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 exemestane.</p>

***Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy.**

STOP TAKING EXEMESTANE 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.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Changes in **eyesight**.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, or vomiting in the first few weeks of treatment.
- Hot flashes which are troublesome.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Vaginal bleeding, discomfort or discharge.
- Headache or pain not controlled with acetaminophen.
- Depression, anxiety (nervousness or worry) or dizziness that is not usual for you.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR
