



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: Letrozole

Other names: FEMARA®

- Letrozole (LET-roe-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. Letrozole is used to help reduce the amount of estrogen produced by your body and decrease the growth of hormone sensitive tumors. Letrozole is a tablet that you take by mouth. The tablet may contain lactose.
- It is important to **take** letrozole exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions.
- Letrozole may be taken with food or on an empty stomach.
- If you **miss a dose** of letrozole, 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.
- Other drugs such as tamoxifen (NOLVADEX®) and raloxifen (EVISTA®) may **interact** with letrozole. Because letrozole 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®). Tell your doctor if you are taking this or any 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.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of letrozole.
- **Store** letrozole tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with letrozole before you receive any treatment from them.
- Letrozole 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
Nausea (upset stomach) may occur when you first start taking letrozole. This usually improves as your body adjusts to letrozole. Most people have little or no nausea.	If nausea is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your letrozole after eating. • Try the ideas in <i>Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</i>.*
Hot flashes (sudden sweating and feelings of warmth) can sometimes occur when you first start taking letrozole. This usually improves as your body adjusts to letrozole.	If hot flashes are troublesome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try taking your letrozole at bedtime. • If night sweats interfere with sleep, try taking your letrozole 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.
Muscle or joint pain may occur a few days after your treatment.	<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.
Headache may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) to decrease or stop headache.
Swelling of hands, feet or lower legs may occur if your body retains extra fluid.	If swelling is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your feet when sitting. • Avoid tight clothing. • Tell your doctor if this continues to bother you.
Tiredness and lack of energy may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try the ideas in <i>Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</i> or <i>Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue</i>.*

