

This information is available in other languages. Please contact the PALS office on 0151 678 5111 Ext. 8437

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille and on tape. Please contact Geoff Pennock or Jean Bird on 0151 604 7289.

Wirral Hospital 

NHS Trust

BREAST SERVICES
SURGICAL DIRECTORATE
PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET
TAMOXIFEN

Wirral Hospital operates a 'no smoking' policy and is totally smoke free on all sites.

Giving up smoking at any time can be beneficial. Help to give up smoking is available from Wirral SUPPORT by telephoning the FagEnds freephone helpline on 0800 195 2131. In hospital support for smokers including nicotine therapy is available

TAMOXIFEN

Some Common Questions Answered

What is Tamoxifen?

Tamoxifen is an anti-breast cancer drug. It is given to most women in addition to their surgery and in some older women it may be the only treatment needed.

Why am I being given Tamoxifen?

It has been shown to give protection against the development of future disease. The benefits are achieved by taking the tablets for 5 years.

How does it work?

Tamoxifen reduces the effect of Oestrogen (the female hormone) in the body. Most breast cancers need Oestrogen to grow, so the Tamoxifen blocks the access of Oestrogen to cells of the body. An added benefit is that it lowers the level of cholesterol in the blood.

What is the dose?

Usually 20mg or 40 mg tablet once a day, your doctor will decide. You can get repeat prescriptions from your GP.

What happens if I forget to take my tablet?

Do not panic. The levels in your blood stream will get you by. Similarly, if you think you have taken two doses in one day, no harm will be done. Take your normal dose as usual the next day. Please remember to pack enough tablets if you are going away on holiday etc.

A suggestion is to keep your tablets near to your kettle and when you make your morning drink you will see them and be reminded.

Why isn't Tamoxifen prescribed to all patients with breast cancer?

Each patient is assessed as an individual. In some women it is dependent on the type of tumour, or other reasons which cause your doctor to decide on another form of treatment.

Side effects of taking Tamoxifen include:

- Hot flushes and night sweats. However, these usually ease once the body has become used to the apparent lower levels of Oestrogen.
- Irregular periods in pre-menopausal women. They may even stop altogether. **However, Tamoxifen is not a contraceptive**, so other precautions must be used to prevent pregnancy.
- You may be affected by vaginal dryness, which can be simply treated. Please ask your GP or Breast Care Nurse.
- One of the side effects is a helpful one, as Tamoxifen can help to strengthen your bones.
- Because of the way Tamoxifen acts on the body there is a chance that it might cause other unwanted effects that may not occur until months or years after this medicine is used. Tamoxifen could possibly increase the chance of cancer of the uterus (womb) in some women. Please discuss this with your doctor.
- Very rarely Tamoxifen can affect your vision. Please let the doctor know, as this can easily be reversed by changing your tablets.
- Tamoxifen can cause a very small increase in the risk of developing clots in the leg, for example Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Can I take Tamoxifen with other medicine?

Tamoxifen is safe to take with other medicines, but if you are on "blood thinning" drugs like Warfarin, the doctor may need to alter the dose.

Can I drink alcohol while taking Tamoxifen?

Yes, it is safe to drink alcohol.

Further Information

If you have any further questions, or would like to talk through any of the above in more detail, please contact the Breast Care Nurses on:

Telephone No: 0151 482 7850/7856/7895
Breast Care Nurse Telephone no: 0171 384 2344

Macmillan Cancer Line 0808 808 2020

Action Against Breast Cancer 01235 8207777

Cancer Backup 0808 800 1234

The Tenovus Cancer Information Centre

Velindre Hospital
Whitchurch
Cardiff CF14 2TL (Mon – Fri 9 – 4.30 except Wed pm)

Marie Curie Cancer Care 020 7599 7777