

Goserelin

What is Goserelin (GOE-se-rel-in) and how does it work?

Goserelin is a cancer medicine known as an “LHRH agonist”. Another name for this medicine is Zoladex. It is made in a laboratory. This medicine, given to pre-menopausal women, causes your ovaries to shut down and stop producing estrogen. When given to men with breast cancer, goserelin causes your testes to shut down and stop producing estrogen and testosterone. To fight cancer, or prevent cancer from coming back, this medicine lowers the amount of estrogen in your body. The cancer cells that “feed” on estrogen are unable to grow. This type of therapy is different from chemotherapy and is also known as “endocrine” or “hormone blocking” therapy.

What should I tell my doctor before starting this treatment?

Talk to your doctor about the following:

- If you have ever had chemotherapy or anti-cancer treatment and the names of the medicines you were given.
- If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant. Your doctor will talk with you about birth control when you take this medicine. Premenopausal females may have a pregnancy test ordered before receiving goserelin.
- If you are breastfeeding.
- If you have been told that you need to start a new medicine.
- The medicines/pills you are taking, including:
 - ▶ Medicines ordered by any of your doctors
 - ▶ Herbs
 - ▶ Vitamins
 - ▶ Over-the-counter medicines

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

How does my doctor decide my treatment dose?

The dose of medicine is the same for all patients (most often administered as a dose of 3.6 mg) and is given every 4 weeks. It is important to stay on schedule during this treatment, as delaying your scheduled treatment may allow your body to start producing estrogen again. **Do not** miss any of your appointments. Your doctor will talk to you about how long you will be on this treatment. You will see your doctor or nurse practitioner at certain times during treatment.

How will my treatment be given?

Goserelin is a small implant (about the size of a pencil tip) that is placed under your skin. The implant slowly dissolves and releases the medicine over the course of 4 weeks. Before your implant is placed, your nurse will spray the area with medicine to numb the area. Your nurse will inject the implant just under the skin in your abdomen (belly). The entire visit, including your doctor's appointment and your treatment will take 1 to 2 hours.

What are the side effects of this treatment in women?

Every person responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of this treatment are:

- Your menstrual period will stop because the medicine causes your ovaries to shut down
- Hot flashes
- Headache
- Mood changes
- Vaginal changes/dryness/itching
- Discomfort with intercourse or loss of interest in sex
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Weakening of the bones (may occur with long-term treatment)

What are the side effects of this treatment in men?

Every person responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of this treatment are:

- Hot flashes
- Headache
- Mood changes
- Loss of interest in sex
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Weakening of the bones (may occur with long-term treatment)
- Erectile dysfunction (not being able to get or keep an erection)

When should I call my doctor?

You should call your doctor **right away** if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Vaginal spotting or bleeding
- If you think you are pregnant
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Swelling of your face, lips or throat
- Severe pain, blistering, redness or swelling in the area where the implant was placed
- Depressed mood or sadness

Is there anything else I should know about this treatment?

- It may take 4 weeks for the medicine to begin working. You may have an extra menstrual period after your first dose. This extra period may have a heavier than normal menstrual flow.
- You should drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day to stay hydrated during treatment. It is especially helpful if you have hot flashes.

- If you are scheduled to have any type of surgery involving the abdominal area below your belly button (for example, breast reconstruction surgery where the surgeon would use abdominal muscle to recreate the breast), please tell your doctor right away. We may need to use an alternative drug to goserelin that would be injected into a different area of the body, until your abdominal wall is healed.
- This treatment will cause you to stop having menstrual periods. Depending on your age, your period may or may not return when your treatment is ended.
- This medicine **should** prevent you from becoming pregnant, but you still need to talk with your doctor about other methods of birth control before you start treatment and during your treatment. **Do not become pregnant when taking this medicine.**
- It may be hard to become pregnant, even after your treatment is finished and your periods have returned.
- To tell how well the medicine is working, your doctor may order blood tests to check your hormone levels during treatment.

For more information about cancer, cancer treatment, side effects or how to care for yourself during treatment, refer to your **Chemotherapy and You** book, or ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

You may also find it helpful to watch The James Patient Education videos at <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos> to help you learn tips for managing treatment side effects.