# Tamoxifen for Males

## What is tamoxifen (tuh·maak·suh·fen) and how does it work?

**Tamoxifen** is a medicine taken by mouth, that blocks the effects of estrogen in breast cancer cells. Your health care provider may use this therapy to prevent breast cancer cells from growing and spreading.

## How does this medicine work?

Tamoxifen is not chemotherapy – it is a type of therapy known as "hormone blocking therapy" or "endocrine therapy". Tamoxifen does not stop your body from making estrogen, it just blocks the effects of estrogen. This therapy can be used in both men and women.

## What should I tell my health care team before starting this treatment?

- If you have ever had anti-cancer treatment and the names of the medicines you were given.
- If you have ever had liver problems.
- If you have ever had a decrease in bone density, also known as "bone thinning" or "osteopenia" or "osteoporosis".
- If you have a history of abnormal clotting in your veins or lungs or take anticoagulant (blood thinner) medicine.
- If you have a history of eye cataracts or other eye problems.
- If you are taking any hormonal medicines.
- If you use tobacco or vape.
- If you have been told that you need to start a new medicine.

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- The medicines/pills you are taking, including:
  - ▶ Medicines ordered by any of your doctors – especially certain antidepressants such as Paroxetine, Fluoxetine, Bupropion, Duloxetine and Sertraline
  - ▶ Herbs
  - ▶ Vitamins
  - ▶ Over-the-counter medicines
- There are certain dietary and herbal supplements you should not take while using Tamoxifen. Ask for the patient education handout, "Breast Cancer: Precautions for Use of Dietary/Herbal Supplements", for more information.

## When is Tamoxifen therapy used?

Tamoxifen may be used to treat hormone-receptor positive (also known as "estrogen-receptor positive (ER) or progesterone receptor positive (PR)" breast cancer.

For early-stage (stages 0-III) hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer, your doctor may use Tamoxifen therapy before or after surgery. If Tamoxifen therapy is given before surgery, it is called a "neoadjuvant" therapy. If it is given after surgery, it is called an "adjuvant" therapy. Your health care team may also recommend Tamoxifen therapy before or after other cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation. This is to help prevent cancer cells from coming back in the breast or other areas in the body. You may need to take adjuvant Tamoxifen therapy for 5 to 10 years.

For advanced stage (stage IV) hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer, Tamoxifen therapy may be used to control the symptoms of the cancer and to prevent the cancer from growing larger or spreading to new areas. Your health care team will talk with you about changing or stopping Tamoxifen if you are unable to tolerate this therapy or if the cancer does not respond well to the treatment.

Sometimes Tamoxifen therapy may be used to prevent breast cancer in patients who are at high risk of developing breast cancer.

## Can Tamoxifen therapy be given with other kinds of treatment?

For early-stage hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer, your health care team can use Tamoxifen therapy before or after other treatments (surgery, chemotherapy or radiation). Tamoxifen therapy can be used by itself, or along with other drugs including: Trastuzumab, Pertuzumab, Ado-Trastuzumab Emtansine or Neratinib if your breast cancer is also "human epidermal growth factor receptor 2" (HER2) positive.

For the treatment of advanced stages of hormone-receptor positive breast cancer, your doctor may use Tamoxifen therapy by itself or along with other types of "targeted" therapy. Tamoxifen therapy is normally not given with chemotherapy.

## How do I handle, store and dispose of Tamoxifen?

- It is safe to handle Tamoxifen as a whole tablet.
- Store it in a closed container in a dry place such as a cabinet away from light, heat, and moisture.
- **Do not** store in your bathroom or refrigerator.
- Keep this medicine away from children and **do not** share it with anyone.
- Talk with your pharmacist about how to get rid (dispose) of this medicine safely.

## How do I take Tamoxifen?

- You can take this medicine with or without food.
- Take the tablet once a day at about the same time every day.
- The nurse will put a check (√) in the box by the amount you need to take each day:

  ☐ 20 mg

  ☐ _____ mg

- If taking liquid Tamoxifen, measure the prescribed amount with a marked measuring spoon, oral syringe, or medicine cup.
- **Do not** take more tablets than prescribed.
- **Do not** stop taking your medicine until your doctor tells you it is okay to do so.
- If you miss a dose by more than 6 hours, wait until it is time to take your next dose; skip the dose you missed. **Do not double up on doses.**

## What are the side effects of Tamoxifen therapy?

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

- Hot flashes or flushing
- Night sweats
- Mood swings or depression
- Fatigue
- Changes in blood cholesterol or triglycerides
- Changes in sex drive
- Erectile dysfunction (not being able to get or keep an erection)
- Muscle or joint aches and pains (also called arthralgias)
- Hair thinning

Some of the rare but serious side effects of Tamoxifen are:

- Blood clots including deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE)

## When should I call my health care provider?

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

- Swelling in one arm or one leg with or without pain
- Sudden or severe headaches, problems with vision, speech, walking, numbness, or weakness in your arms and legs or on one side of your body
- Swelling of your face, lips or throat
- Depressed mood or sadness
- Changes in vision
- Yellowing of skin or eyes

**Call 9-1-1 and let your health care provider know right away if you have sudden chest pain or shortness of breath.**

## Is there anything else I should know about this treatment?

- Your health care provider may ask you to stop taking Tamoxifen before surgery. Call your health care provider at least 4 weeks before any type of scheduled surgery.
- You should drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic fluid each day to stay hydrated during treatment. This is also helpful if you have hot flashes.
- Talk to your health care provider if bone density tests are needed.
- Include weight-bearing exercises in your daily routine. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about taking calcium and vitamin D supplements to help strengthen your bones.
- You should see your eye doctor at least once per year for a vision exam and be sure to let them know that you are taking Tamoxifen.
- 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.
- If you would like more information on how to manage side effects, ask for these patient education handouts:
  - ▶ Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects – Tips to Sleep Better
  - ▶ Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects – Fatigue
  - ▶ Hot Flashes in Men

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.