



Tamoxifen (Nolvadex®)

("ta-MOKS-i-fen")

How drug is given: by mouth

Purpose: blocks estrogen receptors in breast tissues, which may decrease the growth of breast cancer

How to take the drug:

- Take with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. **Do not double dose.**
- Take each dose at the same time every day.

Storage and disposal

- Store at room temperature, away from heat and moisture.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, out of reach of children and pets.
- If you have unused pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush them down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

Things that may occur during treatment:

- Hot flashes and/or sweats are common. As your body adjusts to the drug, these may not bother you as much. Caffeine, spicy food, alcohol, and stress may cause these to get worse. Mild exercise may help.
- If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, tell your cancer care team.
- Report any spotting or bleeding that is not normal for you. This is important if you have gone through menopause.
- You are at increased risk of blood clots. If you have pain, swelling, or and/or warmth in one leg, tell your cancer care team right away.
- Some patients report mild nausea. This usually ends in the first few weeks.

- Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body, may occur. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.
- Restlessness, sedation, depression, or confusion can occur. You may notice a change in your mood. Tell your cancer care team if you have any of these symptoms.
- You may have difficulty sleeping. Please talk to your cancer care team if you cannot sleep.
- You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. If these bother you, ask your cancer care team what type of drugs you may use to help with this pain.
- Your body may not be able to get rid of extra fluid. This is called edema. You may notice mild swelling in your arms or legs.
- In rare instances, your blood pressure may go up. If this happens, you may be given medication to help with this. If you have headaches or dizziness, tell your cancer care team right away.
- In rare instances this drug may increase your risk to develop endometrial cancer.

Reproductive concerns and sexual health

Men and women with questions about fertility, birth control, or pregnancy should discuss concerns with their cancer care team. It is not safe to take this medicine during pregnancy. It could harm an unborn baby.

Men

- This medicine may increase your fertility and lead to pregnancy with a female partner.
- To keep from getting pregnant, use a barrier form of effective birth control and keep using it for at least 2 months after you stop treatment.
- Barrier methods of birth control prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. Discuss with your cancer team which type of barrier method is best for you. Some barrier methods are cervical caps, female/male condoms, and diaphragms with spermicides. Some are available over-the-counter; others must be prescribed.

Women:

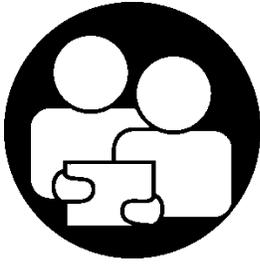
- This medicine may make it easier to get pregnant if you have not gone through menopause.
- Hormonal forms of birth control, such as birth control pills, implants, or shots may not work while you are receiving tamoxifen.
- To keep from getting pregnant, use a barrier form of effective birth control and keep using it for at least 2 months after you stop treatment.
- Barrier methods of birth control prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. Discuss with your cancer team which type of barrier method is best for you. Some barrier methods are cervical

caps, female/male condoms, and diaphragms with spermicides. Some are available over-the-counter; others must be prescribed.

- Women should not breastfeed while receiving tamoxifen.
- Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant or are planning to breastfeed.
- Sexual health: Only a small group of women have sexual health issues related to tamoxifen. If you do, they can be troublesome. If you experience any symptoms such as painful intercourse, vaginal dryness, or negative feelings about body image, there are many resources at Dana-Farber. Talk with your cancer team or call Dana-Farber's Sexual health program at 617-632-4523. For more information, visit www.dana-farber.org/sexualhealth.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you are taking other medications. Please speak with your cancer care team if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your cancer care team.

If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, talk with a member of your cancer care team right away.



Oral Chemotherapy Fact Sheet

Oral chemotherapy medicines are given by mouth in the form of capsules, tablets, or liquid. These safety tips will help you understand what to do when you are taking oral chemotherapy.

Please note: If you are on a clinical trial, you may be given special instructions.

How to take this drug

- Swallow each tablet or capsule whole. Do not break, crush, or chew.
- Prepare your drug away from food and food prep areas.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule.
- Do not double the dose.
- If you are on a clinical trial, you will be given special instructions if you miss a dose.
- If you are unable to swallow the pill, speak with your nurse or pharmacist about other ways to take your medication.
- If you vomit or throw up your medication, call your physician for further instructions.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken pills (tablets or capsules).

Storage

- Most oral chemotherapy medicine is stored at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture. You will be told if the medication you are taking needs special storage or handling.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, in a safe place, away from other family medications. All medications need to be kept out of the reach of children and pets.

Disposal

- If you have unused oral chemotherapy pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

Safe handling of body waste in the home after chemotherapy

- Chemotherapy stays in the body for hours or even days, and is found in vomit, urine, stool, and sweat (body wastes). Special care must be taken to prevent the patient's body waste from coming into accidental contact with the patient or caregiver.

Body wastes

Patient and caregiver:

- You can use the toilet (septic tank or city sewage) as usual. There is no research to support double flushing to prevent accidental contact (although this may be suggested for certain medications). Ask your doctor or nurse what they suggest for your medication.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet. If urine, vomit, or stool gets on your body, wash with soap and water. Always wear gloves when cleaning equipment or disposing waste from a urinal or commode.
- Pregnant caregivers should **not** handle patient body waste.
- It is safe for family and friends to use the same toilet, as long as all body waste is cleaned from the toilet.
- To absorb urine or stool, use a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper, or sheet. Change it immediately when soiled. Then wash skin with soap and water.
- If you have an ostomy, you or your caregiver may want to wear gloves when emptying or changing appliances.

Laundry

- Always wear disposable gloves when handling sheets or clothes that have been soiled with body waste.
- Soiled items should be kept and washed separately from the other laundry.

Oral chemotherapy is a serious drug that requires extra caution. If you have questions or concerns about your oral chemotherapy, do not hesitate to call your clinician. For more tips, tools and short videos to help you manage oral chemotherapy visit our web page at <http://www.dana-farber.org/oralchemo>



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THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR NOTES FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY:

