



## LETROZOLE (Adjuvant Treatment)

**OTHER NAMES:** Femara®

**PURPOSE:** Letrozole is a hormonal type medication which may be used for postmenopausal women to prevent recurrence of breast cancer in the early breast cancer setting. It works by decreasing the amount of estrogen in the body.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Letrozole is taken by mouth in the form of tablets.  
Take once a day at approximately the same time of day.  
Tablets may be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

**SIDE EFFECTS:** Not all patients will experience all side effects.

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
<p>Hot flushes: A sudden feeling of warmth which may be accompanied by sweating</p> <p>(common, but usually improves as your body adjusts to the medication)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress in layers so you can remove clothing when you get warm.</li> <li>• When possible, lower the room temperature.</li> <li>• Try taking a cool shower or sipping ice water.</li> <li>• If lasting or if troublesome, speak to your doctor or nurse.</li> <li>• Medications may be helpful in managing continuing or bothersome symptoms. Discuss with your doctor.</li> </ul>
<p>Muscle, bone or joint pain</p> <p>(common, may occur when you first start taking letrozole)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol® and others) or other pain medications such as ASA (aspirin), ibuprofen or others if needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Nausea</p> <p>(may occur when you first start taking letrozole- usually mild to moderate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This rarely requires treatment and may resolve in a short time.</li> <li>• Take letrozole with a meal to lessen stomach upset.</li> <li>• If vomiting occurs and lasts more than 24 hours, contact your doctor or nurse.</li> </ul>
<p>Headaches (not common)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol® and others) or other pain medications such as ASA (aspirin), ibuprofen or others if needed.</li> <li>• Contact your nurse or doctor if headaches persist.</li> </ul>
<p>Swelling/fluid retention – Hands and feet may swell and you may notice a gain in weight</p> <p>(not common)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> <li>• Report swelling or weight gain to your doctor.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
Other uncommon symptoms you may experience include hair thinning, anorexia or vaginal dryness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report these to your doctor.</li> </ul>

**OTHER IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS:**

- Bone loss (osteoporosis/osteopenia) may occur with letrozole. This may put you at an increased risk for fractures
  - You will likely have a bone mineral density test when you start treatment with letrozole.
  - It is important that you receive adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D in your diet. If your daily diet does not provide 1500 mg elemental calcium and 800 IU vitamin D, you should ask your physician or pharmacist to recommend an additional supplement.
  - Maintain a physically active lifestyle to help keep your bones healthy and strong. If possible, try to include daily weight-bearing exercises such as walking.
- You may be at risk for developing increased blood lipid (cholesterol) levels.
  - A blood test can be done to assess your current blood cholesterol levels when you start treatment with letrozole.
  - Reduce risk factors such as smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity that may lead to increased blood cholesterol.
- Do NOT take any estrogen-containing therapies while taking letrozole.
- Other medications may interact with letrozole.  
Do not start taking new medications or herbal products without checking with your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you are taking any other prescription or non-prescription medicine, vitamin, or herbal product.
- Inform other doctors or pharmacists that you are taking letrozole.
- Inform your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist if you develop any new allergies or sensitivities.
- If you experience any symptoms or problems not listed above, inform your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

**STORAGE:**

- Store letrozole at room temperature away from heat, direct light, and moisture.
- Whenever possible, return unused medication to the pharmacy from which it was dispensed for proper disposal.

**If you have any questions regarding this or any other drug therapy, please phone your cancer centre.**

Cross Cancer Institute – (780) 432-8771, Tom Baker Cancer Centre – (403) 521-3764  
 Central Alberta Cancer Centre – (403) 343-4802, Grande Prairie Cancer Centre – (780) 538-7288  
 Lethbridge Cancer Centre – (403) 329-0633, Medicine Hat Cancer Centre – (403) 529-8817

OR