

Aromatase Inhibitor Side Effects

How to Manage

Your breast cancer treatment includes an aromatase inhibitor. This anti-hormonal medicine stops your body from making estrogen. You take this pill by mouth every day to prevent cancer recurrence. Recurrence is the return of the cancer. You may be asked to take this medicine for 5 to 10 years. These medicines have side effects that may bother you. Please talk with your oncology health care team about how to manage side effects. The most common side effects and their treatment are listed below. **It is important not to start any supplement for these side effects prior to discussing with your oncology care team. Hormone therapy should be avoided.**

Hot Flashes

- Consider modifying your food choices for the relief of hot flashes such as a low inflammatory diet, avoiding processed foods, and limiting caffeine intake (sodas, coffee, teas and chocolate all have caffeine).
- Consider the over-the-counter supplement Relizen®. Explained that this consists of a blend of highly purified flower pollen extract that has been shown to be safe and effective for patients with a history of estrogen receptor positive breast cancer who are experiencing hot flashes.
- Alternative prescriptive medications can also be considered such as Effexor®, Oxybutynin, or Gabapentin
- Find ways to limit or handle stress such as meditation, deep breathing, mindfulness or journaling.
- Wear loose cotton or other lightweight or breathable fabrics.
- Consider a hydro-powered thermal cooling sleep system for night sweats.
- Ask your oncology care team about acupuncture if hot flashes are not controlled with the above.

Vaginal Dryness

- If you develop vaginal dryness or painful intercourse please ask your oncology care team for a referral to the Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center's Women's Sexual Health clinic.

Joint Pain

- Do regular aerobic exercise.
- Consider taking over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications as needed. If you require these medications regularly please discuss with your oncology care team.
- Consider the over-the-counter supplements including Magnesium Glycinate and tart cherry. Please discuss with your oncology care team for dose and frequency.
- Talk with your health care team about taking a 2-week break from the medicine if you have a flare up of symptoms.
- Your doctor may refer you to Rheumatology.

Osteopenia or Osteoporosis

- Take supplements with calcium and vitamin D daily. Please discuss with your oncology care team for dose and frequency.
- Do weight bearing exercises such as jogging, light walking or Pilates.
- Continue to avoid tobacco products, limit alcohol and caffeine intake.
- Regular bone density exams will be ordered every 1-2 years typically. Your doctor may refer you to your PCP or a Bone Health Clinic if bone loss is noted for prescription medications that can help strengthen your bones.