

## Medication Information Sheet

**exemestane** (ex-uh-MESS-tane)

*This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.*

**Other Name:** Aromasin®

**Appearance:** tablet

**What is this medication for?**

- For treating a certain type of hormone sensitive breast cancer, and other cancers

**What should I do before I have this medication?**

Tell your health care team if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had:

- liver, kidney or heart problems,
- uncontrolled blood pressure,
- high cholesterol levels,
- tear in your stomach or intestines,
- bone thinning / loss or bone fractures (or if you have family members that have / had either of these), or
- any allergies.

**Remember to:**

- Tell your health care team about all of the other medications you are taking.
- Keep taking other medications that have been prescribed for you, unless you have been told not to by your health care team.

## How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

### Talk to your health care team about:

- How this medication may affect your sexual health.
- How this medication may affect your ability to have a baby, if this applies to you.
- If there is **any** chance of pregnancy happening, you and your partner together must use **2 effective forms of birth control** at the same time until **6 months** (general recommendation) after your last dose. Talk to your health care team about which birth control options are best for you.
- Do not breastfeed while on this medication.
- This medication may harm an unborn baby. Tell your health care team if you are pregnant, become pregnant during treatment, or are breastfeeding.

## How is this medication given?

- This medication is usually taken once a day by mouth. Talk to your health care team about how and when to take your medication.
- Swallow whole with a glass of water, with or after a meal, preferably at the same time each day.
- Do not crush or chew tablets.
- If you forget to take a dose of your medication do not take extra (double up). Follow the instructions given to you or talk to your health care team if you are unsure about what to do. If you are unable to talk to your healthcare team, take your next dose at the usual time.
- If you vomit (throw up) after taking your medication, talk to your health care team about what to do.
- If you take too much of your oral anticancer medication by accident, or if you think a child or a pet may have swallowed your medication, you must call the Ontario Poison Control Center right away at: 1-800-268-9017.

## What else do I need to know while on this medication?

### Will this medication interact with other medications or natural health products?

- This medication can interact with other medications, vitamins, foods and natural health products. Interactions can make the treatment not work as well or cause severe side effects.
- Tell your health care team about all of your:
  - prescription and over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications and all other drugs, such as marijuana (medical or recreational)
  - natural health products such as vitamins, herbal teas, homeopathic medicines, and other supplements
- Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- Do not take any treatment containing estrogen (including herbal supplements) while you are on exemestane, as this can make your treatment not work as well.
- If you are taking a blood thinner (such as warfarin) and have recently taken a medication called tamoxifen, your health care team may need to take extra blood tests and may change your dose.

### What to DO while on this medication:

- DO check with your health care team before getting any vaccinations, surgery, dental work or other medical procedures.
- DO talk to your health care team about your risk of getting osteoporosis and heart problems after this treatment.

### What NOT to DO while on this medication:

- DO NOT smoke or drink alcohol while on treatment without talking to your health care team first. Smoking and drinking can make side effects worse and make your treatment not work as well.

## How should I safely store this medication?

- Do not throw out any unused medications at home. Bring them to your pharmacy to be thrown away safely.
- Keep this medication in the original packaging at room temperature in a dry place, away from heat and light. Keep out of sight and reach of children and pets.

## How to safely touch oral anti-cancer medications

### If you are a patient:

- Wash your hands before and after touching your oral anti-cancer medication.
- Swallow each pill whole. Do not crush or chew your pills.

### If you are a caregiver:

- Wash your hands before and after touching the oral anti-cancer medication.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if there is a chance you or your partner may become pregnant:

- Wear nitrile or latex gloves when touching tablets, capsules or liquids.
- Wash your hands before putting on your gloves and after taking them off, even if your skin did not touch the oral anti-cancer medication.
- Throw out your gloves after each use. Do not re-use gloves.

## What to do if oral anti-cancer medication gets on your skin or in your eyes

### If medication gets on your skin:

- Wash your skin with a lot of soap and water.
- If your skin gets red or irritated, talk to your health care team.

### If medication gets in your eyes:

- Rinse your eyes with running water right away. Keep water flowing over your open eyes for at least 15 minutes.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting exemestane. The table is set up to list the most common side effects first and the least common last. It is unlikely that you will have all of the side effects listed and you may have some that are not listed.

Read over the side effect table so that you know what to look for and when to get help. Refer to this table if you experience any side effects while on exemestane.

<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<b>Side effects and what to do</b>	<b>When to contact health care team</b>
<p><b>Changes to your hormone levels</b></p> <p>Your treatment causes changes in the levels of estrogen in your body. This can affect your mood, energy levels or physical appearance, among other things.</p> <p>You may have many of these symptoms or none at all. Your symptoms may also change at different times in your treatment.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <p><b>Hot flashes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A hot flash feels like a sudden warmth in your upper body and face. It can happen quickly and with no warning.</li> <li>• Your face may get flushed (turn red) and you may sweat more.</li> <li>• Hot flashes can cause you to have trouble sleeping.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other symptoms of having low estrogen levels:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaginal dryness (possibly with discharge or bleeding)</li> <li>• Memory loss</li> <li>• Mood changes, depression</li> <li>• Thinning of the bones and increased risk of fracture</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent hot flashes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid triggers such as spicy food, alcohol and caffeine (tea, coffee, and soft drinks).</li> <li>• Exercise regularly. Ask your health care team what exercises are appropriate for you before you start any new exercise.</li> <li>• Quitting smoking may also help.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have hot flashes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep cool, dress in light, cotton clothing or in layers that you can easily remove. Use a fan.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of water or other liquids (at least 6 to 8 cups) unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> <li>• Lay a towel on top of your bed sheet before you sleep so you can change it easily if you sweat at night.</li> </ul> <p>Hot flashes may improve over time. Talk to your health care team if this or any symptoms of low estrogen are bothersome for you.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<b>Side effects and what to do</b>	<b>When to contact health care team</b>
<p><b>Headache; Mild joint, muscle pain or cramps</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mild headache</li> <li>• New pain in your muscles or joints, muscle cramps, or feeling achy</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take pain medication (acetaminophen or opioids such as codeine, morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone) as prescribed.</li> <li>• Rest often and try light exercise (such as walking) as it may help.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Pain</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>
<p><b>Fatigue</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of tiredness or low energy that lasts a long time and does not go away with rest or sleep.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active. Aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days.</li> <li>• Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise.</li> <li>• Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to.</li> <li>• Ask family or friends to help you with things like housework, shopping, and child or pet care.</li> <li>• Eat well and drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less).</li> <li>• Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Fatigue</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<b>Side effects and what to do</b>	<b>When to contact health care team</b>
<p><b>Liver problems (may be severe)</b></p> <p>Your health care team may check your liver function with a blood test. The liver changes do not usually cause any symptoms.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely, you may develop yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark pee or pain on the right side of your belly. This may be severe.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If you have any symptoms of liver problems, get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>
<p><b>Hair thinning or loss</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your hair may begin to become thin or fall out during or after treatment.</li> <li>• In most cases, your hair will grow back after treatment, but the texture or colour may change.</li> <li>• In very rare cases, hair loss may be permanent.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a gentle soft brush.</li> <li>• Do not use hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if this bothers you</p>
<p><b>Trouble Sleeping</b></p> <p>Your medications may cause trouble sleeping. It may get better once your body gets used to the medication or when your treatment ends.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may find it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep.</li> <li>• How well you sleep may change over your treatment. For example, you may have several nights of poor sleep followed by a night of better sleep.</li> <li>• You may wake up too early or not feel well-rested after a night's sleep.</li> <li>• You may feel tired or sleepy during the day.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Dizziness</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may feel light-headed and like you might faint (pass out).</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lay down right away so you do not fall.</li> <li>Slowly get up and start moving once you feel better.</li> <li>Do not drive a motor vehicle or use machinery if you feel dizzy.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>
<p><b>High blood pressure</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are usually no signs of high blood pressure.</li> <li>Rarely, you may have headaches, shortness of breath or nosebleeds.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check your blood pressure regularly.</li> <li>Your doctor may prescribe medication to treat high blood pressure.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a severe headache get emergency help right away as it may be a sign your blood pressure is too high.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

**Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.**

**If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:**

- pain, swelling or hardening of vein in your arms or legs
- swelling in legs, ankles or belly
- sudden start of coughing or coughing blood
- irregular heartbeat, problems breathing or shortness of breath, fainting or pain in your chest
- trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms and legs
- severe rash (may blister or peel), swollen face, lips or tongue, chest or throat tightness
- severe pain in the stomach, blood in stools or in vomit, black coloured stools



## Who do I contact if I have questions or need help?

My cancer health care provider is: \_\_\_\_\_

During the day I should contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Evenings, weekends and holidays: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Notes:

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## November 2020 Updated/Revised info sheet

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to [www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms](http://www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms).

*The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.*

*A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.*