

ORAL CHEMOTHERAPY EDUCATION



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LETROZOLE

Name of your medication

Generic name — letrozole (LEH-truh-zole)

Brand name — Femara® (FEH-muh-ruh)

Common uses

Letrozole is used in the treatment of certain types of hormone-dependent breast cancer in postmenopausal women.

Letrozole may also be used for other treatments.

Dose and schedule

Taking letrozole as instructed is important to allow your treatment to be as effective as possible, so here are some key points to remember.

- ☐ Your dose may vary, but the usual dose of letrozole is 2.5 milligrams (2.5 mg) to be taken by mouth at a scheduled time once a day.
- ☐ Letrozole can be taken with or without food but at the same time each day.
- ☐ Letrozole should be taken whole and not crushed, cut, or dissolved. If you are unable to swallow letrozole, talk to your care provider or pharmacist for possible options.
- ☐ If you miss a dose of letrozole, **do not** take an extra dose or two doses at one time. Simply take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Be sure to write down if you miss a dose and let your care provider know about any missed doses.

Drug and food interactions

- ☐ Letrozole has many drug interactions. Inform your care providers of all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal products.
- ☐ Talk with your care provider or pharmacist before taking new medications or supplements, or receiving any vaccines.

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Storage and handling

Handle letrozole with care. Just like when chemotherapy is given into the vein, this drug can be toxic, and exposure of the drug to others should be limited.

- ☐ Store letrozole at room temperature (68°F–77°F) in a dry location away from light.
- ☐ Keep letrozole out of reach of children and pets.
- ☐ Leave letrozole in the provided packaging until it is ready to be taken.
- ☐ Whenever possible, give letrozole to yourself and follow the steps below. If a family member, friend, or caregiver needs to give letrozole to you, they also need to follow these steps:
 1. Wash hands with soap and water.
 2. Put on gloves to avoid touching the medication. (Gloves are not necessary if you give the drug to yourself.)
 3. Gently transfer the letrozole from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.
 4. Administer the medicine immediately by mouth with water.
 5. Remove gloves and do not use them for anything else.
 6. Throw gloves and medicine cup in household trash.
 7. Wash hands with soap and water.
- ☐ If a daily pill box or pill reminder will be used, contact your care team before using:
 - The person filling the box or reminder should wear gloves (gloves are not necessary if you are filling the box or reminder).
 - When empty, the box or reminder should be washed with soap and water before refilling. Be sure to wash hands with soap and water after the task is complete, whether or not gloves are worn
- ☐ If you have any unused letrozole, **do not** throw it in the trash and **do not** flush it down the sink or toilet. Talk to your care provider or pharmacist about proper disposal of letrozole.
- ☐ If you are traveling, put your letrozole's packaging in a sealed plastic bag. Ask your pharmacist if any additional travel precautions are needed.

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Side Effects of Letrozole

Below are common side effects that have been known to happen in about one third or more of patients taking letrozole are listed on the left side of this table. You **MAY NOT** experience these side effects. Options to help manage any side effects that do occur are included on the right side of this table. These should be discussed with your care provider. If you experience any side effect you cannot manage or that is not listed here, contact your care provider.

Possible Side Effect	Management
Changes in electrolytes and other laboratory values <ul style="list-style-type: none">High cholesterol levels	<p>Changes in some lab values may occur and will be monitored by a simple blood test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">You may not feel any symptoms if the changes are mild, and they usually are not a sign of a serious problem.Letrozole may cause high cholesterol. Speak to your care team to know when you need to have blood tests to monitor your cholesterol levels.More severe changes may occur, which can be a sign of a serious problem. <p>Notify your care provider if you have any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Shortness of breathChest discomfortWeakness or fatigueNew aches and painsHeadachesDizzinessSwelling of your legs or feetRed- or brown-colored urine
Hot flashes (sudden sweating and feelings of warmth)	<p>If hot flashes are bothersome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mild, regular exercise may help after consulting with your care provider.Try staying in a cool environment.Wear layers so that if you experience a hot flash, the outer layers may be removed.Avoid or limit caffeine, spicy food, alcohol, and stress, which may cause hot flashes to worsen. <p>Inform your care provider if this side effect is bothersome as there may be medications that can help with hot flashes.</p>
Muscle or joint pain or weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep a diary of your pain, including a description of when and where the pain is occurring, what it feels like, and how long it lasts.Stay as active as possible, but know that it is okay to rest as needed, too.Tell your care provider if pain interferes with your activity. <p>If the pain or weakness bothers you, ask your provider what you may use to help with this discomfort. Take only pain medication that has been prescribed or recommended by your care provider.</p>

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Serious side effects of letrozole

- ☐ Letrozole may increase your risk for osteoporosis which is a medical problem where your bones are more fragile and more likely to break. Your care team may prescribe a medication to help prevent broken bones.
- ☐ You may feel more tired or dizzy while taking letrozole. Use caution when driving or operating machinery.

If you experience ANY uncontrolled side effect, call your physician or healthcare center immediately:

(INSTITUTIONAL CONTACT INFO)

Handling body fluids and waste

Letrozole remains in your body for several days after it is taken, so some of the drug may be present in urine, stool, sweat, or vomit. Once you have started to take letrozole, it is important to follow the instructions below every day for as long as your treatment lasts. This is to keep yourself, loved ones, and the environment as safe as possible.

- ☐ Pregnant women should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- ☐ Toilet and septic systems
 - You may use the same toilet, septic tank, and/or sewer that you usually use. If you have a low-flow toilet, close the lid and flush twice to ensure all waste has been discarded.
 - If the toilet or toilet seat becomes soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surfaces before other people use the toilet.
 - Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- ☐ If you need a bedpan, be sure your caregiver knows to wear gloves to assist with cleanup and to wash the bedpan with soap and water every day.
- ☐ If you do not have good control of bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb body waste.
- ☐ Wash any skin that has been exposed to body waste or letrozole with soap and water.
- ☐ Linens or clothing that are soiled with body fluids or body waste should be washed separately from other linens and clothing. If you do not have a washer, place the soiled linens in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- ☐ Wash hands with soap and water after touching linens or clothing that may be soiled with body fluids.

Pregnancy, sexual activity, and contraception

- ☐ Women should not become pregnant and men should not get a partner pregnant while taking letrozole. Men and women of childbearing age and potential should use effective contraception during therapy and for a minimum of 3 weeks after the last dose of letrozole.
- ☐ Effective contraception could include one or more of the following: oral contraceptive, barrier methods, etc.
- ☐ Do not breastfeed while taking letrozole and for at least 3 weeks after the last dose of letrozole.
- ☐ Inform your care provider if you become pregnant.
- ☐ It is safe to hug and kiss. Special precautions may be needed for sexual activity while on letrozole, and you are encouraged to ask your care provider.

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Obtaining medication

- ☐ Talk with your care provider about the process for obtaining your letrozole.

(PHARMACY OR SPECIALTY PHARMACY CONTACT INFO)

Additional resources

Product prescribing information: www.novartis.us/sites/www.novartis.us/files/Femara.pdf?TB_iframe=true

Updated – September 29, 2023

Additional instructions

Important notice: The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), National Community Oncology Dispensing Association, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources. This guide does not cover all existing information related to the possible uses, directions, doses, precautions, warnings, interactions, adverse effects, or risks associated with this medication and should not substitute for the advice of a qualified healthcare professional. Provision of this guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring of this medication by ACCC, HOPA, NCODA, or ONS, who assume no liability for and cannot ensure the accuracy of the information presented. The collaborators are not making any representations with respect to the medications whatsoever, and any and all decisions, with respect to such medications, are at the sole risk of the individual consuming the medication. All decisions related to taking this medication should be made with the guidance and under the direction of a qualified healthcare professional.

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