letrozole  (LETT-row-zole)

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: Femara®

Appearance: tablet

What is this medication for?

- For treating breast cancer or ovarian cancer that is sensitive to hormones.

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had liver, kidney or heart problems (including heart attack, stroke, or uncontrolled blood pressure), high cholesterol levels, muscle or joint pain, personal or family history of thin bones/osteoporosis or related fractures, or have any allergies.
- This drug contains a small amount of lactose. If you cannot tolerate lactose, talk to your doctor.
- People with cancer have a higher risk of getting other cancers or developing blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a long period of time. Discuss any concerns about this medication with your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- Letrozole is usually used in post-menopausal women. The use of this medication in women who may become pregnant may cause harm to the unborn baby if pregnancy occurs. Let your health care team know if you are pregnant, become pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding.
- If there is any chance that you may become pregnant, you and your partner together must:
  - Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time while taking this drug. Keep using birth control for at least 6 months after your last dose unless your health care team told you differently. Talk to your health care team to figure out the best method(s) for you and/or your partner.
  - Do not breastfeed while using this drug.

*The most updated version and more symptom control information can be found on: [http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo)
Prepared with input from the Cancer Care Ontario-Medication Information Sheets Working Group.
September 2017
How is this medication given?

- Swallow whole with a glass of water, with or without food.
- Do not crush or chew the tablets.
- Letrozole is usually taken once a day, at about the same time each day.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you can remember, but skip this if there are only a few hours before the next planned dose. Never double the dose to make up for the forgotten one.

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

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- Do not take with any treatment containing estrogen (including herbal supplements) as this can make letrozole less effective.
- Drinking alcohol and smoking during your treatment may increase some side effects and make your medication less effective. Speak to your health care team about smoking and drinking alcohol while on treatment.

How should I safely store this medication?

- 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.
- Do not throw out any unused medications at home. Bring them to your pharmacy to be thrown away safely.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Common side effects usually occur in more than 1 out of every 10 patients. Other side effects are less common, but may be severe. You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects that are not listed.

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### Side effects and what to do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More Common Side Effects</th>
<th>When to contact doctor?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abnormal cholesterol or fat levels in the blood</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your doctor may monitor these regularly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headache; muscle pain, cramps or stiffness</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for the right dose for you.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rest often, but may try light exercise.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constipation</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eat a balanced diet with fibres such whole grains, fruit and raw vegetables.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drink plenty of fluids. Try light exercise regularly.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speak to your doctor if no bowel movement for 3 or more days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Also see Constipation Pamphlet.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mild swelling in arms and legs; puffiness</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep your feet up when sitting. Eat a low-salt diet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Avoid tight fitting clothing.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tiredness, feeling dizzy</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rest often; take naps if needed. Move slowly when getting up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eat well-balanced meals and drink plenty of fluids. Light exercise may help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery when feeling tired or dizzy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bone pain; Bone loss</strong></td>
<td>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bone fractures</strong> (long-term effect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watch for any severe or unusual bone pain, including the back, hips, wrist, or other bone(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your doctor may monitor your bone density periodically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Letrozole may increase the risk of bone loss or fractures. To help prevent this, your doctor may tell you to take calcium and vitamin D supplements or other prescription medications to treat osteoporosis. Talk to your doctor before taking these supplements. (Continued on next page)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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## More Common Side Effects

- Get emergency medical help if you experience a bone fracture (severe bone pain, unable to move)
- Read more information about bone health via dietary and lifestyle measures in the Bone Health in Postmenopausal Women* pamphlet.

### Increased sweating, feelings of warmth

*(hot flashes)*

- Avoid triggers such as alcohol, caffeine (tea, coffee, cola), chocolate, hot & spicy food, stress and heat.
- Exercise regularly. Keep cool; dress lightly, drink plenty of water. May improve over time.
- **Other symptoms of having low estrogen levels:** Vaginal dryness (possibly with discharge or bleeding); Memory loss; Emotional effects (depression, for example). Contact your doctor or nurse if these feelings bother you.

### Nausea and vomiting

*(generally mild)*

- Drink clear fluids and avoid large meals. Get fresh air and rest.
- Limit spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.
- Take anti-nausea drug(s) exactly as directed by your doctor. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it.
- Contact your doctor if nausea lasts more than 1 day or if any vomiting occurs.
- Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet.*

## Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe

### Heart problems

*(irregular heartbeat, chest pain, fainting, swelling in legs/ankles/belly, shortness of breath)*

Get emergency medical help right away

### Allergic reaction

*(severe rash, itchiness, swollen face, lip or tongue, chest or throat tightness)*

Get emergency medical help right away

### Cataracts

*(blurred, cloudy or dim vision, difficulty seeing at night)*

Contact your health care team as soon as possible (office hours)

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<td><strong>Serious skin rash</strong> (may include blisters or skin peeling)</td>
<td>Get emergency medical help right away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blood clot</strong> (limb pain or swelling, hardened vein in limb), may occur in lungs (sudden start of coughing, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)</td>
<td>Get emergency medical help right away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage of an artery</strong> (blood vessel) in your heart, brain, chest, belly, or limbs; this may result in <strong>stroke</strong> (sudden loss of vision, speech, or the use of your limb(s)) or <strong>heart attack</strong> (chest pain, shortness of breath), or pain in chest, belly or limb</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

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