



**Northern Ireland
Cancer Network**

TAMOXIFEN

**FOR WOMEN WITH A FAMILY HISTORY OF BREAST
CANCER DECIDING WHETHER TO TAKE TAMOXIFEN
FOR RISK REDUCTION**



What is tamoxifen?

Tamoxifen is a tablet that is used to prevent breast cancer in women who are at moderate or high risk of developing the disease.

Tamoxifen works by blocking the action of oestrogen. Oestrogen is a female hormone that is known to increase the likelihood of a woman developing a certain type of breast cancer, known as oestrogen receptor positive (or ER+) breast cancer.

Should I consider taking tamoxifen?

You can be prescribed tamoxifen if you are at moderate or high risk of breast cancer. If breast cancer runs in your family, you may be at increased risk.

Tamoxifen is a tablet that is taken once a day for five years. If you wish to consider taking tamoxifen it is important that you are aware of the benefits of treatment and the possible side effects.

What are the potential benefits?

Tamoxifen can reduce the risk of breast cancer by up to 40% if used for five years, and this reduction can last for at least a further 10 years. Tamoxifen reduces blood cholesterol, premenstrual breast pain and discomfort.

What are the potential side effects?

Although many women will not experience side effects when taking tamoxifen, we also know that some women will be affected.

Uncommon Side Effects: Irregular or heavy periods, Amenorrhea (periods stop completely), premenstrual bloating, larger fibroids or ovarian cysts.

Effectiveness

The results of trials have shown a reduction in the risk of breast cancer by approximately 40%. This result has led to the NHS deciding that tamoxifen may be prescribed to prevent breast cancer.

Where do I go from here?

If you are at high or moderate risk of breast cancer and want more information about tamoxifen, you should discuss this with your doctor or local family history clinic.

Your doctor can tell you more about your risk of breast cancer and ways you can help to reduce your risk. Although having a family history of breast cancer is a significant risk factor it is important to lead a healthy lifestyle. A healthy diet and regular exercise can help to reduce your breast cancer risk as well as your risk of other diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke

Useful Contacts

Health and Social Care Trust	Belfast	 028 9504 1018
	Northern	 028 9442 4874
	South Eastern	 028 9055 0499
	Southern	 028 3861 2086
	Western	 028 7161 1187
Action Cancer	 www.actioncancer.org	
	 02890 803344	
BRCA LINK NI	 www.brcani.co.uk	
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