

# **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?

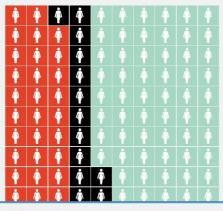
Tamoxifen can reduce the risk of breast cancer by up to 40% if used for five years, and this reduction can last for at least a further 10 years. Tamoxifen reduces blood cholesterol, premenstrual breast pain and discomfort.

## 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.

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

Rare Side Effects: Increased risk of uterine cancer in postmenopausal women and/or increased risk of blood clots. If you are postmenopausal and have not had a hysterectomy there is an alternative to tamoxifen which you can discuss with your doctor



## Hot Flushes

Out of 100 women at increased risk of breast cancer, 29 women will experience hot flushes. If the same 100 women take tamoxifen an additional 13women will experience hot flushes.



# Night Sweats

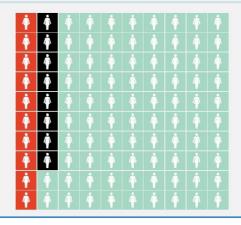
Out of 100 women at increased risk of breast cancer, 29 women will experience night sweats.

If the same 100 women take tamoxifen, an additional 14 women will experience night sweats.

# Vaginal discharge

Out of 100 women at increased risk of breast cancer, 10 women will experience vaginal discharge

If the same 100 women take tamoxifen an additional 8 will experience vaginal discharge.



#### **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	<b>2</b> 028 9504 1018
	Northern	<b>2</b> 028 9442 4874
	South Eastern	<b>2</b> 028 9055 0499
	Southern	<b>2</b> 028 3861 2086
	Western	<b>2</b> 028 7161 1187
<b>Action Cancer</b>		
	<b>2</b> 02890 803344	
<b>BRCA LINK NI</b>		