

# TAMOXIFEN

Other names: Genox®, Tamoxifen-Sandoz®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why you are taking this medication

Tamoxifen (ta-MOX-i-fen) is a medicine that is used to treat many types of cancer. Some cancers are hormone sensitive (oestrogen or progesterone receptor positive) and their growth can be affected by blocking the effect of the hormone oestrogen. Tamoxifen blocks the effect of oestrogen produced by your body and decreases the growth of hormone sensitive tumours. Tamoxifen may also have anti-cancer effects not related to the hormone oestrogen. It is a tablet that you take by mouth.

Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or allergic reaction to tamoxifen before taking tamoxifen.

Take tamoxifen exactly as directed by your doctor. Tamoxifen may be taken with or without food and with a glass of water. Tamoxifen may be taken at any time of the day but should be taken at the same time of each day.

If you miss a dose of tamoxifen take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.

Store tamoxifen tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

Tell doctors or dentists that you are being treated with tamoxifen before you receive any treatment from them. If you are planning to have major surgery you should stop taking tamoxifen 2-3 weeks prior to surgery and only restart it once you are back to normal activity. This helps to lower the risk of having a blood clot develop after surgery.

## Other medication

Other drugs may interact with tamoxifen. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Because tamoxifen works by blocking the effects of oestrogen in your body, it is recommended you avoid oestrogen replacement therapy or birth control pills.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medicines.

Alcohol (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of tamoxifen.

## Pregnancy and breast feeding

It is best to use birth control while being treated with tamoxifen (but do not use birth control pills as they interact with tamoxifen). Tamoxifen may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. Tamoxifen will not induce menopause unless you are approaching the age of your natural menopause. It may cause your period to become irregular.

Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.

Do not breast feed during treatment with tamoxifen.

## Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
<p><b>Hot flushes</b> (sudden sweating and feelings of warmth) may commonly occur when you first start taking tamoxifen. This usually improves as your body adjusts to tamoxifen.</p>	<p>If hot flushes are troublesome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your tamoxifen at bedtime.</li> <li>• If night sweats interfere with sleep, try taking tamoxifen in the morning.</li> <li>• Some find it helpful to avoid alcohol, spicy food, caffeine intake (coffee, tea, and colas, chocolate).</li> <li>• Follow a regular exercise pattern.</li> <li>• Try staying in a cool environment.</li> <li>• Wear layers so if you do experience a hot flush, the outer layers can be removed.</li> <li>• Talk to your doctor if hot flushes continue to bother you. There may be medicines available to lessen them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vaginal discharge</b> or <b>dryness</b> may rarely occur.</p>	<p>If vaginal dryness is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try water based lubricants.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor for more advice if vaginal dryness continues to bother you.</li> </ul> <p>If vaginal discharge is bothersome, make sure you mention it at your next visit.</p>
<p><b>Nausea</b> (upset stomach) may sometimes occur when you first start taking tamoxifen. This should improve as your body adjusts to the tamoxifen. Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>If nausea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your tamoxifen with food.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat often in small amounts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Headache</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take paracetamol every 4-6 hours if needed up to a maximum of 4 g (8 tablets each day).</li> </ul>

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<b>Muscle or joint pain</b> may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take paracetamol or ibuprofen for mild to moderate pain. Tell your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Skin rashes</b> may rarely occur.	<p>If the rash is bothersome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check with your doctor during office hours.</li> <li>Otherwise make sure to mention it at your next visit.</li> </ul>
<b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may sometimes occur.	<p>This is usually mild.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> </ul>
<b>Swelling of hands, feet or lower legs</b> may rarely occur if your body retains extra fluid.	<p>This is usually mild. If swelling is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>Avoid tight clothing.</li> </ul>
<b>High blood pressure</b> may rarely occur with long-term use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have your blood pressure checked regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>Blood clots</b> may rarely occur, usually in the legs. This is more likely to happen if you have had blood clots before. Signs to watch for include tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain or shortness of breath.	<p>Tell your doctor if you have ever had treatment for a blood clot. To help prevent blood clots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep active.</li> <li>Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>Avoid tight clothing.</li> <li>Do not sit with your legs crossed at the knees for long periods of time.</li> </ul>
<b>Weight changes</b> may sometimes occur (weight gain or loss).	<p>To maintain your weight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep active.</li> <li>Modify your diet as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Hair thinning</b> may rarely occur. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with tamoxifen. The colour and texture of your hair may change.	<p>To minimise thinning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush.</li> <li>Take care with the use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in cholesterol or triglycerides</b> may rarely occur (types of fat in your blood).	<p>Discuss this with your doctor if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A history of heart disease or high blood pressure.</li> <li>Elevated triglycerides.</li> <li>You may need your cholesterol and triglyceride levels checked a few months after starting tamoxifen.</li> </ul>
<b>Endometrial cancer:</b> cancer of the lining of the uterus (womb) may rarely occur with prolonged use of tamoxifen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell your doctor if you have any unexpected bleeding from the vagina, persistent abdominal pain and/or pressure or discomfort in the pelvis.</li> <li>There is no risk of this cancer if you have had a hysterectomy (uterus removed).</li> </ul>

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<b>Cataracts</b> may rarely occur.	See your doctor or an optometrist for an eye check if your vision becomes cloudy or blurred.
<b>Depression</b> may rarely occur.	If you become unusually sad or tearful and lose interest in the usual things that give you pleasure, speak to your doctor.

**Stop taking tamoxifen and see your doctor or get emergency help immediately if you have:**

- Signs of a **stroke** such as sudden onset of severe headache, eyesight changes, slurred speech, loss of coordination, weakness or numbness in arm or leg.
- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** including dizziness, fast heart beat, face and tongue swelling and breathing problems with or without a rash.

**See your doctor as soon as possible (during office hours) if you have:**

- Signs of **anaemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- If you have bone metastases, report unusual **thirst** if it occurs in the first four weeks of treatment.
- Unexpected **bleeding** from the vagina, persistent **abdominal pain** and/or **pressure or discomfort** in the pelvis.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay coloured stools.
- **Changes in eyesight.**

**Check with your doctor if any of the following continue or bother you:**

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation.
- Hot flushes that are troubling.
- Significant persistent aches and pains.
- Headache or pain not controlled with paracetamol.
- Excessive swelling of the feet or lower legs.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Vaginal discomfort, dryness or discharge.
- Significant weight gain or loss.
- Excessive breast swelling or soreness.
- Persistent cough or sore throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Depression, anxiety (nervousness or worry), or dizziness that is unusual for you.
- If you have bone metastases, bone pain may initially worsen; if pain persists or is not controlled, check with your doctor.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist**