

Anastrozole (an-as-troe-zole)

Brand Name: Arimidex[®] (a-rim-e-dex)

Patient Education Quick Reference Guide

Uses For This Medication

- Anastrozole is used to treat adults with breast cancer.
- This medication may also be given for other conditions as determined by your doctor.

How This Medication Works

Anastrozole works by decreasing the amount of estrogen your body makes. Estrogen is a hormone that causes some breast cancer cells to grow. By decreasing the amount of estrogen in your body, the breast cancer cells which need estrogen to grow will not be able to grow.

Benefits of This Medication

Anastrozole is used to treat breast cancer several different ways. Anastrozole can be used as an additional therapy after surgery for postmenopausal women with breast cancer which is in the early stages. This is known as adjuvant therapy. It can also be beneficial in the treatment of disease that has metastasized, or spread, to other parts of the body. Lastly, anastrozole can be used in the treatment of advanced breast cancer that has not responded to other hormonal treatments such as tamoxifen (Nolvadex[®]).

Who Should Not Take This Medication

You should **not** take this medication if you:

- Are allergic to anastrozole or any of its components

Precautions to be Aware of Before Taking This Medication

Organ related precautions

This medication is broken down by enzymes (chemicals) in the liver and cleared from the body. In patients with severe liver disease, anastrozole may not break down normally which can lead to high levels of this medication in the body and a greater chance of side effects. If you have any liver problems before starting this medication, make sure that you tell your doctor or healthcare provider so that he or she can watch you carefully for possible problems or side effects.

Patient specific precautions

- It is not known if this medication is safe and effective in children.

Precautions (continued)

Pregnancy and breastfeeding precautions

- This medication may cause fetal harm. When taking this medication, you should use effective birth control to prevent pregnancy. You should not take hormonal birth control (pills, patches, rings, implants, injections) while on anastrozole since this medication can stop hormonal birth control methods from working. Barrier type methods of birth control (condoms, diaphragms) should be used instead if needed. Tell your doctor or healthcare provider right away if you or your spouse/partner becomes pregnant.
- It is not known whether this medication is found or excreted in breast milk. Since many medications are excreted in breast milk and because this medication can cause serious harmful reactions in infants, breastfeeding should be avoided.
- Many anti-cancer therapies can cause sterility. Notify your doctor or healthcare provider if you want to have children in the future.

Medication and Food Interactions

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or healthcare provider of all prescription or over-the-counter products you are taking, including dietary supplements or vitamins, herbal medicines and homeopathic remedies. Do not start or stop any medication without your doctor or healthcare provider's approval. Possible interactions can occur with anastrozole and the following medications:

- Tamoxifen (Nolvadex®)
- Birth control pills or other estrogen containing medications

NOTE: This list may not include all medications that can have interactions with anastrozole.

Side Effects

- All medications can cause side effects. However, not all patients will experience these side effects. In addition, other side effects not listed can also occur in some patients. You should call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns while you are on this medication.
- You should contact your doctor or healthcare provider if you experience any side effect(s) which don't go away, worsen, are serious in nature, or are worrisome to you.
- Side effects can occur when anastrozole is given alone or together with other chemotherapy medications. The side effects listed below are those reported in patients who were treated with anastrozole alone.

More common side effects

- ✓ Weakness
- ✓ Decreased energy level
- ✓ Digestive upset (such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)

Less common side effects

- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increased or decreased appetite
- ✓ Sweating, hot flushes
- ✓ Bone and joint problems
- ✓ Mood changes
- ✓ Pain, sore throat

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Revised 8/6/06