

# Tamoxifen

**Care Team Contact Information:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy Contact Information:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

- This treatment is often used for breast cancer.
- It may also be used for other reasons.

**Goal of Treatment:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Treatment may continue for a certain time period, until it no longer works, or until side effects are no longer controlled.

## Treatment Regimen

Treatment Name	How the Treatment Works	How the Treatment is Given
Tamoxifen (tuh-MOK-sih-FEN): Nolvadex (NOL-vuh-deks), Soltamox (SOL-tah-mox)	Slows down or stops the growth of cancer cells by blocking certain hormone receptors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tablet(s) taken by mouth.</li> <li>• Oral solution taken by mouth.</li> </ul>

## Treatment Administration and Schedule

Your tamoxifen dosing instructions:

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- Tamoxifen comes in 2 tablet strengths (10 mg and 20mg) and 1 oral solution strength (10 mg/5 mL).
- Take tamoxifen 1 time a day, around the same time each day.
- Take tamoxifen with or without food.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking tamoxifen unless your care team tells you to.
- Your care team may tell you to change your dose, temporarily stop, or completely stop taking tamoxifen if you develop certain side effects.
- If you are prescribed tamoxifen tablets, swallow tamoxifen tablets whole with water. Do not break or chew your tablets.
- If you are prescribed tamoxifen oral solution, use the dosing cup that comes with tamoxifen to measure the correct amount for each dose. Ask your care team if you are not sure how to measure your dose.
- If you miss a dose of tamoxifen and it has been less than 12 hours since your usual time, take it as soon as you remember. If it has been more than 12 hours, skip the missed dose. Do not take 2 doses at the same time.
- If you take too much tamoxifen, call your care team or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

## Storage and Handling of Tamoxifen

- Tamoxifen tablets
  - Store tamoxifen tablets at room temperature between 68°F and 77°F (20°C and 25°C) in a dry location away from light.
  - Whenever possible, give tamoxifen to yourself and follow the steps below. If someone else gives it to you, they must also follow these steps:
    1. Wash hands with soap and water.
    2. Put on gloves to avoid touching the medication. Note: Gloves are not needed if you give the drug to yourself.
    3. Transfer the tamoxifen from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.
    4. Administer the medicine immediately by mouth with water.
    5. Remove gloves, if used, and throw them and medicine cup in household trash.
    6. Wash hands with soap and water.
  - If you plan to use a daily pill box or pill reminder, contact your care team before using it.
    - When the box or reminder is empty, wash it with soap and water before refilling.
    - The person refilling the box or reminder should:
      - Wear gloves. Note: Gloves are not needed if you are refilling it yourself.
      - Wash their hands with soap and water after completing the task, regardless of whether gloves were worn.
- Tamoxifen oral solution
  - Store tamoxifen oral solution at room temperature between 68°F and 77°F (20°C and 25°C). Do not freeze or refrigerate the oral solution.
  - Keep tamoxifen oral solution in the original bottle to protect it from light.
  - Keep the bottle tightly closed.
  - Use within 3 months of opening. Throw away any tamoxifen remaining in the bottle after 3 months.
- Keep tamoxifen and all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.
- Ask your care team how to safely throw away any unused tamoxifen. Do not throw it in the trash or flush it down the sink or toilet.

## Appointments

Appointments may include regular check-ups with your care team, lab visits, and imaging tests. It's important to keep your appointments whenever you can. If you miss any appointments, call your care provider as soon as possible to reschedule your appointment.

## Supportive Care to Prevent and Treat Side Effects

Description	Supportive Care Taken at Home
Supportive Care to Prevent and Treat Side Effects	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Common Side Effects

Side Effect	Important Information
<p>Hot Flashes</p>	<p>Description: Hot flashes are sudden feelings of warmth that spread over your body, often leading to sweating and a rapid heartbeat. Hot flashes may last from a few seconds to several minutes and can be uncomfortable or disrupt daily activities.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a journal to track frequency, duration, and triggers of hot flashes.</li> <li>• Dress in layers with lightweight clothing to adjust to temperature changes.</li> <li>• Stay cool by using fans, air conditioning, or cool cloths.</li> <li>• Avoid triggers such as hot drinks, spicy foods, caffeine, and alcohol.</li> <li>• Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, yoga, or meditation to reduce stress.</li> <li>• Maintain healthy habits with a balanced diet and regular exercise.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe hot flashes</li> </ul>
<p>Your Body May Hold Too Much Fluid (Fluid Retention) Leading to Swelling (Edema)</p>	<p>Description: Fluid retention (edema) is swelling caused by excess fluid in body tissues, often seen in the legs, ankles, feet, hands, or abdomen. It can cause tightness, weight gain, and discomfort.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh yourself daily and keep a record to notice sudden weight gain.</li> <li>• Elevate swollen legs when sitting and avoid standing for long periods.</li> <li>• Wear compression stockings if your care team recommends them.</li> <li>• Limit salt (sodium) intake and follow any fluid restrictions your care team gives.</li> <li>• Stay active and do gentle movement to improve circulation.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling that suddenly worsens or spreads to other areas</li> <li>• Pain, redness, or warmth in the affected area</li> <li>• Signs of shortness of breath or difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Swelling is persistent and does not improve with home management</li> <li>• Unexpected weight gain</li> </ul> <p>Note: Your care team may ask you to contact them if your weight increases by a certain amount over a certain time period.</p>

<p>Vaginal Discharge</p>	<p>Description: Tamoxifen can cause changes in vaginal discharge. This may be clear, white, watery, blood-tinged, or thicker than usual. Some changes can be normal, but they can also signal infection or other problems.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the area clean and dry. Gently wash with mild, unscented soap and water; pat dry.</li> <li>• Wear breathable cotton underwear and change it daily.</li> <li>• Use sanitary pads if needed; avoid tampons unless your care team approves.</li> <li>• Do not douche or use scented sprays, wipes, or vaginal products.</li> <li>• Avoid sexual activity if it causes pain or increases discharge until checked.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or heavy bleeding from the vagina or bleeding after menopause</li> <li>• Foul-smelling, green, or very discolored discharge</li> <li>• Severe pelvic or lower belly pain, fever, or chills</li> <li>• Itching, burning, or pain with urination or sexual activity</li> <li>• Discharge that is persistent or getting worse</li> </ul>
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Select Rare Side Effects

Side Effect	Talk to Your Care Team if You Have Any of These Signs or Symptoms
<p><b>Changes in the Lining (Endometrium) or Body of Your Uterus (Boxed Warning)</b></p>	<p>These changes may mean serious problems are starting, including cancer of the uterus.</p> <p>Vaginal bleeding or bloody discharge that could be a rusty or brown color. You should call your care team even if only a small amount of bleeding occurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in your monthly bleeding, such as in the amount or timing of bleeding or increased clotting.</li> <li>• Pain or pressure in your pelvis (below your belly button).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stroke (Boxed Warning)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg (especially on one side of the body)</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Trouble speaking or understanding speech</li> <li>• Difficulty seeing in one or both eyes</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Loss of balance or coordination</li> <li>• Sudden severe headache with no known cause</li> </ul>
<p><b>Blood Clots in Your Veins or Lungs (Boxed Warning)</b></p>	<p>Blood clots may occur during treatment with tamoxifen and for up to 2 to 3 months after you stop taking tamoxifen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden chest pain</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Coughing up blood</li> <li>• Pain, tenderness, or swelling in one or both of your legs</li> </ul>
<p>Eye Problems</p>	<p>Tamoxifen can increase your chance of developing cataracts and other eye problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry or red eyes</li> <li>• Eye pain or swelling</li> <li>• Vision changes</li> <li>• Increased tears</li> <li>• Sensitivity to light</li> <li>• Blurred vision</li> </ul>
<p>Liver Problems</p>	<p>Tamoxifen can cause changes in liver function blood tests, and sometimes can cause liver cancer and other serious liver problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yellowing of your skin or the white part of your eyes (jaundice)</li> <li>• Severe nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen)</li> <li>• Dark, tea-colored urine</li> <li>• Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal</li> </ul>

<p>High Cholesterol and Triglycerides Levels in Your Blood (Hyperlipidemia)</p>	<p>Treatment can raise cholesterol and triglyceride levels in your blood. While cholesterol is needed by the body, high levels can increase the risk of heart disease. Triglycerides are blood fats, and very high levels may raise the long-term risk of inflammation of your pancreas (pancreatitis) or heart problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptoms of heart attack or stroke, such as sudden numbness, weakness, or chest pain</li> </ul>
<p>Changes in Bone Mineral Density</p>	<p>Tamoxifen can affect your bones. In people who are past menopause, tamoxifen tends to protect against bone loss during the 5-year treatment period. In people who are still having periods, tamoxifen may cause a drop in bone density, which could raise the chance of fractures. Talk with your care team about bone checks (like bone density scans) and ways to keep your bones healthy.</p>
<p>Tumor Flare</p>	<p>Some people with metastatic breast cancer may have a short-term increase in bone or tumor pain (a “flare”) soon after starting treatment. This can be a sign the medicine is working and usually gets better quickly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tender or swollen lymph nodes</li> <li>• Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Rash</li> </ul>
<p>High Calcium Levels in Your Blood (Hypercalcemia)</p>	<p>In some people with bone metastases, high blood calcium (hypercalcemia) can happen within a few weeks of starting treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased thirst</li> <li>• Urinating often</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Bone pain</li> <li>• Muscle weakness</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Irregular heartbeats</li> </ul>

**Before starting treatment, ask your care team when to call 9-1-1 or seek emergency help.  
If you experience any new, worsening, or uncontrolled side effects, contact your care team immediately.**

## Intimacy, Fertility, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

- Treatment may **change how you feel about intimacy and your body**. However, physical closeness—such as holding hands and hugging—remains safe. It is common to have questions about intimacy. If needed, talk to your care team for guidance.
- Treatment can affect your **ability to have children**. It may damage your reproductive organs or stop them from working. If you are worried about fertility, talk to your care team before starting treatment.
- Treatment may **harm an unborn baby**.
  - If you are able to become pregnant, take a pregnancy test before starting treatment.
  - Use an effective method of birth control during treatment and for 2 months after your last dose of tamoxifen. Talk to your care team about birth control options that you may use during this time. You should not use hormonal contraceptives such as birth control pills, patches, implants, or IUDs that contain hormones.
  - If you think you might be pregnant or if you become pregnant, tell your care team right away.
  - If your partner is able to become pregnant, use an effective method of birth control—such as condoms—during treatment with tamoxifen.
- **Do NOT breastfeed** during treatment and for 3 months after your last dose of tamoxifen.

## Handling Body Fluids and Waste

Some drugs you receive may stay in your urine, stool, sweat, or vomit for many days after treatment. Because many cancer drugs are toxic, your body waste may also be dangerous to touch. To help protect yourself, your loved ones, and the environment, **follow these instructions** for at least **2 months** after your last dose of **tamoxifen**:

- People who are pregnant should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- You can use your usual toilet. Always close the lid and flush to discard all waste. If you have a low-flow toilet, flush twice.
- If the toilet or seat is soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surface after each use before others use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet.
- If you need a bedpan, inform your caregiver so they can wear gloves and assist with cleanup. Wash the bedpan with soap and water daily.
- If you cannot control your bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb waste.
- Wash any skin exposed to body waste with soap and water.
- Wash soiled linens or clothing separately from other laundry. If you don't have a washer, place them in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching soiled linens or clothing.

## Additional Information

- **Tell your care team about all the medicines you take.**  
This includes prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbal products. Before starting any new medicine, supplement, or vaccine, ask your care team first.
- **This Patient Education Sheet may not describe all possible side effects.**  
Call your care team for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

## Notes

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Important notice: The Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), Network for Collaborative Oncology Development & Advancement, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources.

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