

Neoadjuvant Endocrine Therapy

What is neoadjuvant endocrine therapy?

Neoadjuvant treatment is a first step to shrink a tumour before the main treatment (usually surgery) is given. It is a tablet taken once a day that starts working with your body hormones to reduce the amount of oestrogen in your body. This should soften and shrink the cancer and hopefully means you may have less surgery. Sometimes we have to delay surgery and this means you can still have treatment while other things are sorted out. You may need a marker clip placed in your breast. This will be discussed with you if necessary.

Why do I need it?

Once you have been given a diagnosis of breast cancer your doctor will discuss various treatment options with you. Not every breast cancer or patient is the same and so treatment must be tailored to you. Treatment could be in the form of surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or endocrine therapy (tablets). Every case is discussed at a multidisciplinary team meeting and an individual treatment plan is formulated. Neoadjuvant endocrine therapy (hormonal treatment) is the treatment of choice for you. This is based on the results of the tests you have had, your general health status and your personal preference.

How do I take the tablets?

It is usually best to take your tablet at the same time each day. If you forget one day don't worry, but start again the next day.

How does it work?

Some breast cancers are stimulated and encouraged to grow by the female hormone oestrogen. The biopsy you have had will show how responsive your tumour is on a scale from 0-8 (8 being the most sensitive). After a woman has gone through the menopause oestrogen is still produced by the body, usually in body fat. Hormones (androgens) within the fatty tissue are converted into oestrogen by an enzyme known as aromatase.

The endocrine therapy (hormone tablet) works by stopping the conversion of these hormones into oestrogen, reducing the amount of oestrogen in your body.

Are there any side effects?

Common side effects may include:

- pain or stiffness in joints
- hot flushes
- nausea
- headaches
- vaginal dryness.

Symptoms are usually mild and temporary and you may not experience any, but if you do and you are concerned please contact your Breast Care Nurse for advice.

There are different medications available and you will be given specific information regarding the medication you have been prescribed.

What follow up can I expect?

We will closely monitor you whilst you are on the tablet. A Breast Care Nurse will ring you and you will have regular appointments at the clinic. If you should become concerned at any time then please ring your Breast Care Nurse who will arrange a review for you.

This treatment often lasts for 6 to 9 months.

Contact us

It is important that you continue to take your tablets as prescribed. If you have any problems or concerns regarding your medication please contact your Breast Care Nurse on 01872 252880 or 252881.