

Goserelin

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people hormonal therapy may reduce the risk of cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor will explain to you whether you will receive chemotherapy or another type of treatment or a combination of both. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment.

Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment which includes the hormonal therapy called goserelin.

Treatment: Goserelin 3.6mg every FOUR weeks by subcutaneous injection (under the skin) until your doctor tells you otherwise.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away. Don't delay, if you feel unwell, please ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**. The lines are open 24 hours a day.

Hormones are substances produced naturally in the body. They act as chemical messengers and help control the activity of cells and organs. Hormonal therapies are drugs that interfere with the way hormones are made or how they work in the body.

Many breast cancers rely on the hormone oestrogen to grow. This type of breast cancer is called oestrogen receptor-positive (ER positive) breast cancer.

Before menopause, almost all oestrogen in women is made by the ovaries. Goserelin stops the ovaries making oestrogen.

Goserelin is used to treat ER positive breast cancer in women who have not yet had their menopause. It may also be used after surgery to reduce the chance of the breast cancer coming back. It may also be used to slow and control the growth of breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body (secondary cancer).

If you feel unwell, you have symptoms of an infection or your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C contact The Christie Hotline straight away



Possible side effects

Hormonal therapy can cause different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all the side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored, and where possible, treated.

Your oestrogen levels may go up in the first few days or weeks after starting on goserelin. This is temporary but may make symptoms caused by advanced breast cancer worse. Doctors call this tumour flare. If you have any concerns, please speak to your doctor.

Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

- **Vaginal bleeding**

Some women have vaginal bleeding during the first few weeks of having goserelin. Let your doctor know if this continues. Your periods will usually stop while you are having this treatment. This is an expected effect, and is caused by the lower levels of oestrogen in the body. When you finish goserelin treatment, your periods are likely to start again. Some women, however, do go through their natural menopause during treatment and their periods don't come back. Even if your periods stop, you can still become pregnant. Goserelin is not a contraceptive drug. You need to make sure that you use effective contraception while having goserelin. You can discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

- **Hot flushes**

Hot flushes and sweats may occur but do lessen after the first few months. Cutting down on nicotine, alcohol and hot drinks containing caffeine, such as tea and coffee can help. Dress in layers, so you can remove clothes as needed. Natural fabrics, such as cotton may feel more comfortable. If hot flushes are a problem, tell your doctor. Low doses of certain antidepressant drugs can help to reduce flushes.

- **Reduced sex drive**

Many women have a lower sex drive during treatment with goserelin. This usually continues for as long as treatment is given. Some women also have vaginal dryness. Lubricating gels can help. These are available from a pharmacist or your doctor can prescribe them. Talk to your doctor or nurse for more information.

- **Skin rash and dry skin**

You may get a mild skin rash or dry skin. Tell your doctor or nurse if this happens. **It is very important to contact your doctor straightaway if you get a severe skin rash.**

- **Hair thinning**

Your hair may become thinner while taking goserelin. Your hair will get thicker after treatment finishes.

- **Mood changes**

Some women have mood changes, or feel low or depressed when having goserelin. Let your doctor or nurse know if this is a problem, especially if you feel low most of the time or think you may be depressed.

- **Headaches**

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have headaches. They can usually be controlled with painkillers you can buy without a prescription

- **Joint and muscle pain**

You may have pain and stiffness in your joints, and sometimes in your muscles while taking goserelin. Let your doctor or nurse know if this happens. They can prescribe painkillers and give you advice. Being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce joint pain and keep your joints flexible.

- **Bone fracture**

Taking goserelin for a few years increases your risk of bone thinning, called osteoporosis. This can increase your risk of a broken bone (fracture). You will usually have a bone density scan to check your bone health before and during treatment. If you are at risk of osteoporosis, your doctor may prescribe drugs called bisphosphonates to protect your bones. They will also usually advise you to take calcium and vitamin D supplements. Regular walking, eating a healthy diet, not smoking and sticking to sensible drinking guidelines will also help to strengthen your bones.

- **Tingling in hands and feet**

Goserelin may cause changes in sensation in the hands and feet. This is usually mild. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have this.

- **Changes in blood pressure**

Goserelin may cause low or high blood pressure. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have ever had any problems with your blood pressure. Let them know if you feel dizzy or have any headaches.

Uncommon side effects

- **High calcium levels**

If you have breast cancer that has spread to the bones, goserelin can cause high calcium levels in the blood (hypercalcaemia). If your calcium is high, you may feel sick or be sick (vomit), be very thirsty, constipated, or sometimes, confused. If you have any of these symptoms, let your doctor know straightaway so they can treat it.

- **Chest tightness or pain**

If you notice changes to your heartbeat, such as it speeding up, let your doctor know. **If you have pain or tightness in your chest, or feel breathless at any time during or after treatment, see a doctor straightaway.**

Sex, contraception & fertility

Protecting your partner and contraception:

We recommend that you or your partner use a condom during sexual intercourse while you are receiving this treatment. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor immediately.

Your doctor will advise you not to become pregnant when you are having goserelin. This is because goserelin may harm a developing baby. For women it is important to use an effective, non-hormonal form of contraception during treatment and for a few months after it finishes. Even if your periods have stopped or are irregular, you still need to use contraception. Your doctor or nurse can tell you more about this.

Fertility:

This treatment may affect your ability to have children. Your doctor or nurse should have discussed this with you. If not, please ask them before you start treatment.

Late side effects

Some side effects may become evident only after a number of years. In reaching any decision with you about treatment, the potential benefit you receive from treatment will be weighed against the risks of serious long term side effects to the heart, lungs, kidneys and bone marrow. With some drugs there is also a small but definite risk of developing another cancer. If any of these problems specifically applies to you, the doctor will discuss these with you and note this on your consent form.

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

- Administration enquiries **0161 918 7606/7610**
- Chemotherapy nurse **0161 918 7171**

For advice ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 (24 hours).

Your consultant is:

Your hospital number is:

Your key worker is:

Notes:

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

© 2018 The Christie NHS Foundation Trust. This document may be copied for use within the NHS only on the condition that The Christie NHS Foundation Trust is acknowledged as the creator.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

