



Managing hormonal treatment side effects

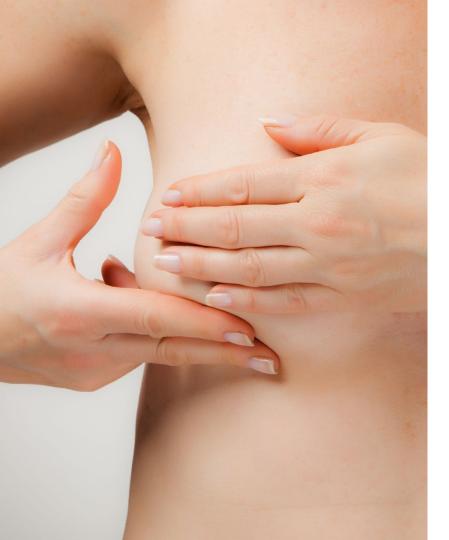
In the spirit of reconciliation, the McGrath Foundation acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging who have nurtured these lands and cared for each other for thousands of years. May we learn from their experience and be guided by their wisdom.

Metro North Hospital and Health Service



## HORMONAL THERAPY

What are the treatments?



## HORMONAL THERAPIES





- Approximately 80% of breast cancers are estrogen receptor positive.
- Hormonal Therapies used are:
  - Tamoxifen
  - Aromatase Inhibitors (Anastrazole, Letrozole, Exemestane)
  - GnRH agonist (Goserelin) + Aromatase Inhibitor

## POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS





### Common reported symptoms

- Hot flushes
- Sweats
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Arthralgias
- Vaginal dryness

## VASOMOTOR SYMPTOMS





- Hot flushes and night sweats are common in most forms of hormonal therapies.
- Occurs most commonly with Tamoxifen and Goserelin + Aromatase Inhibitor.
- Greatest proportion reported in those with abrupt onset i.e. GnRH agonist use, chemotherapy/surgical induced, post menopausal women ceasing HRT.
- Common cause of non-compliance or discontinuation of therapy.
- Contributes to fatigue, poor concentration and mood changes.

# TREATMENTS – VASOMOTOR SYMPTOMS





#### Non-pharmacological treatments

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Hypnosis
- Avoid Triggers (Spicy Foods, alcohol and caffeine)
- Wear loose cotton clothing
- Maintain ideal body weight
- Exercise
- Minimise Stress
- Stop Smoking
- Fans, water sprays, cool environments

#### **Pharmacological treatments**

- Escitalopram 10mg or Citalopram 10mg increasing to 20mg if needed
- Venlafaxine SR 37.5mg increasing to 75mg
- Gabapentin 100 300mg, up to 900mg/day. Can be used at night to improve sleep.
- Paroxetine 10 20mg unless using tamoxifen
- Clonidine 0.1mg
- Oxybutynin 2.5mg 5mg BD



## TREATMENTS - ARTHRALGIA'S

- Switch to a different aromatase inhibitor
- Simple analgesia i.e. paracetamol and NSAID for pain relief
- Physical Exercise
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Treatment break short term



Cancer Survivors | YMCA Fitness & Recreation

# TREATMENTS – FATIGUE & INSOMNIA





- Physical Exercise
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in person or online
- Yoga / Meditation
- Limit length of naps during day
- Healthy, well balanced diet
- Melatonin

### CAN-SLEEP: MAKING NIGHT-TIME SLEEP PROBLEMS GO AWAY



A guide for people with cancer

Can-Sleep - Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

## VAGINAL SYMPTOMS

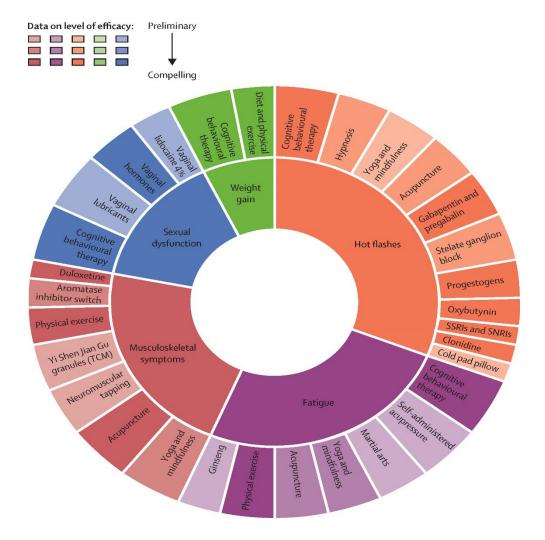




- Vaginal symptoms such as vaginal dryness, painful intercourse are quite common with aromatase inhibitors
- Tamoxifen users tend to experience increased vaginal discharge
- Psychosocial effects decreased libido, changes in self-esteem, barrier to intimacy
- Patient's often reluctant to bring issue up be proactive

#### **Management**

- Vaginal lubricants (water or silicone based) i.e. K-Y Jelly, Astrolglide, Pjur
- Vaginal moisturisers Replens
- Aqueous lidocaine applied to vulvar prior to intercourse may help reduce pain
- Recent RCT has shown the use of low dose vaginal estrogen does not increase systemic
  estradiol and may be considered when all other options have failed but should be
  discussed with treating Oncologist.



Source: Franzoi et al., 2021



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#### **CASE STUDY**

- 52 y.o. female, 35mm mixed IC NST / ILC classic / Inv. Mucinous Grade 2, 1/9 LN's ER + / PR +/
   HER2 –
- Underwent WLE + axillary clearance 2021
- Adjuvant chemotherapy Dec 2021 May 2022 (ceased 2 weeks early due to toxicity)
- Adjuvant radiation therapy to breast
- Commenced Tamoxifen July 2022

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#### **CASE STUDY**

- Patient initially started on Tamoxifen, main side effect was hot flushes and ongoing fatigue (present since chemo).
- Encouraged regular exercise (pt. not doing any) for fatigue and educated on ways to manage hot flushes.
- January 2023 ongoing fatigue, weight gain. 1 month treatment break recommended and repeat OFT. Referred to YMCA Cancer Survivors Exercise Program.
- Pt reported mild symptom improvement during 1 month break. OFT = menopausal. Switched to Anastrazole.
- Pt. ceased Anastrazole after 10 days due to severe headaches, arthralgia's, bone pain and sore eyes. Agreed to trial exemestane and tolerating since March 2023.

Seeing Exercise physiologist as well – GP can provide chronic health care plan

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