

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.

The logo for Metro North Hospital and Health Service is a teal square with a white diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. The text is white and positioned in the bottom-right quadrant of the square.

Metro North
Hospital and
Health Service

The McGrath Foundation logo features the text "McGrath Foundation" in a white, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized, pink, hand-drawn heart shape.

McGrath
Foundation

HORMONAL THERAPY

What are the treatments?





HORMONAL THERAPIES



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

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS

Metro North
Hospital and
Health Service



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, Astroglide, 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.

Data on level of efficacy:

■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■

Preliminary
↓
Compelling



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

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 Anastrozole.
- Pt. ceased Anastrozole 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

THE END

