

# Letrozole Treatment

## Patient Information

FERTILITY  
FUSION

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## Introduction

Letrozole (Femara) is a medication approved for the treatment of breast cancer. It is an aromatase inhibitor and works by lowering the production of Estrogen. Letrozole has also been shown to be effective at inducing ovulation in infertility patients.

Treatment may increase the chance of a twin pregnancy, although this is much less than with Clomiphene, where the risk can be increased by over four-fold.

## Benefits

The benefits of taking Letrozole tablets are to encourage or regulate ovulation to achieve a pregnancy. The half-life of Letrozole is very short (2 days) compared to Clomiphene. This means the medication is metabolized more rapidly and the side effects are less. Letrozole does not affect the cervical mucus or endometrial (womb) lining as much as Clomiphene. This is better for sperm transport in the cervix and a more favourable womb lining for implantation.

## Alternatives

Alternatives to Letrozole tablets are:

- Clomiphene tablets
- Gonadotrophin injections

## Risks

- Ovarian hyperstimulation
- Increased risk of multiple pregnancy (approximately doubled)

## Possible side effects:

- Hot flushes are most common. Other side effects are nausea, headaches, bloating, muscle aches, blurred vision and fatigue. They can occur in approximately 10 to 20% of patients and are limited to that cycle.

If you experience problems with vision, pain or swelling in the abdomen or vomiting, the medication should be stopped and medical advice sought. Also should you have any other questions or worries, please feel free to ring the ward and speak to a member of staff.

The starting dose is usually 2.5mgs a day from day three to day seven of your menstrual cycle (period), day 1 being the first full day of bleeding.

You will be asked to attend for a blood test on day 21 of that cycle to check your progesterone level. This hormone test will inform us whether you have ovulated or not. Some patients with irregular periods may be asked to attend on different days of the cycle to try to determine whether ovulation has occurred.

It may take several days for the progesterone result to be available. Please telephone the nurses at the fertility centre for the result. You will be advised to stay on the same dose of medication or to increase the dose if ovulation has not occurred.

If ovulation has occurred and you are not pregnant, in the next cycle you should take the same dose of Letrozole and ring the fertility centre for a scan, on or around days 8 to 10. This will enable us to advise you more effectively when it is best to try for a pregnancy.

Before starting Letrozole treatment the doctor or nurse will discuss the drugs with you. If you do not understand, or have any concerns, please contact the Fertility Centre for further advice.

Most patients will ovulate following treatment with one or two tablets of the Letrozole a day. Some patients may require higher doses and others may not ovulate at all.

Under these circumstances alternative treatments will be discussed.

Once ovulation has been confirmed it is usual to continue on the same dose for the next six cycles. If a pregnancy has not occurred after six ovulatory cycles you will be asked to see the Consultant.

It is perfectly safe to take Letrozole for up to 12 months, although few pregnancies will occur after 4 to 6 months of treatment.

## **Contact telephone numbers**

### **Fertility Fusion, Wrightington Hospital**

01257 256251 Monday to Friday 8am to 4:30pm

### **Swinley Ward, Royal Albert Edward Infirmary**

Out of hours or in an emergency Telephone: 01942 822568

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan WN1 2NN

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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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