

Hormonal Therapy Information

What are Hormone Receptors?

- The diagnosis of breast cancer is made by taking a biopsy from the patient's breast and then sending the tissue to the pathology lab for testing.
- The cancerous tissue removed from the breast is tested for the presence or absence of hormone receptors, which include the estrogen receptor (ER) and the progesterone receptor (PR).
- The presence or absence of hormone receptors helps to determine the most appropriate treatment of breast cancer.
- If the patient's tumor is ER and/or PR positive, hormonal therapy may be recommended as part of the treatment plan.
- However, there are also several other tumor and patient factors that must be considered to determine the potential risks and benefits of hormonal therapy.

What are the Benefits of Hormonal Therapy?

- Adjuvant therapy for early stage breast cancer includes treatments given after surgery to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence and death from breast cancer.
- Drug treatments used may include chemotherapy, targeted therapy and hormonal therapy.
- Hormonal therapy includes tamoxifen and the aromatase inhibitors, letrozole, anastrozole and exemestane. These drugs may be given for 5 to 10 years.
- Many recent advances have been made in the hormonal therapy of breast cancer and the treatment of breast cancer has changed considerably in last several years.
- Some patients are unable to take hormonal therapy due to side effects or other health conditions.
- Some patients who receive adjuvant hormonal therapy still have recurrence of their breast cancer. Hormonal therapy may still be used to treat recurrent or metastatic breast cancer but eventually the cancer will become resistant to hormonal therapy.

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