

# How is primary breast cancer treated? Hormone therapy

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This information is for anyone who has primary breast cancer and wants to know more about how it is treated.

It is written by Breast Cancer Care, a charity that helps people who have breast cancer and other breast conditions.

You can also get Breast Cancer Care's longer free booklet **Treating primary breast cancer**.

# What is in this information?



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In this information is a simple summary of hormone therapy for primary breast cancer. Click on a question below to go straight to that question.

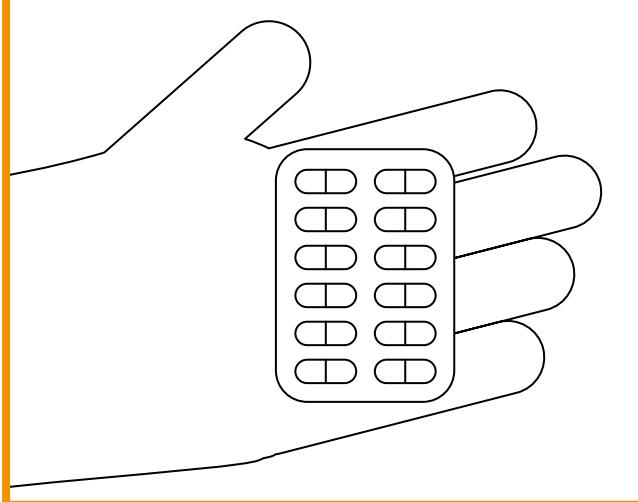
## Hormone therapy

**What is hormone therapy?**

**How will I know if hormone therapy will help me?**

**What are the side effects of hormone therapy?**

# Hormone therapy



## What is hormone therapy?

Hormone therapy is the name for a range of different treatments that work in a similar way.

All hormone therapies aim to stop a hormone called oestrogen from helping your breast cancer to grow.

Not all breast cancers are helped to grow by hormones. Hormone therapy is also sometimes called endocrine therapy.

# Hormone therapy

## How will I know if hormone therapy will help me?

Hormone therapy will help you if you have the sort of cancer that is helped to grow by oestrogen.

To find out, tests are done on a small part of the breast cancer.

If the tests show that your cancer is helped to grow by oestrogen, it is oestrogen receptor positive. This means hormone therapy will be helpful in treating your breast cancer.

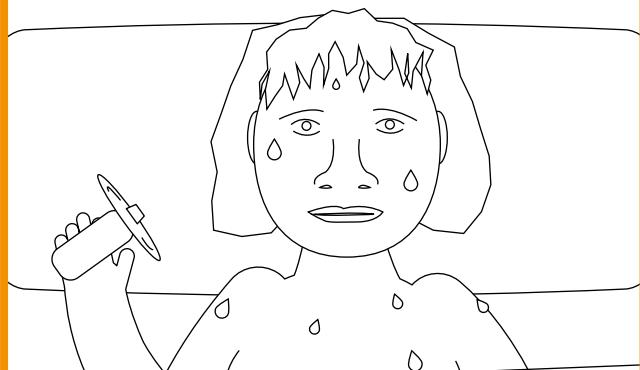
If your breast cancer is not the sort that is helped to grow by oestrogen, it is oestrogen receptor negative. This means hormone therapy won't be used in treating your breast cancer.

There are lots of different hormone therapy drugs.

Hormone therapy is usually given after you have had other treatments. Sometimes it is given before surgery.

# Side effects

## What are the side effects of hormone therapy?



The drugs used in hormone therapy can cause side effects. The most common side effects are below.

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- dry, itchy or painful vagina
- painful joints

Always tell your breast care nurse or treatment team how your treatment is affecting you. They can often suggest things to help make side effects easier to cope with.

# Information and support

## Where can I find out more about my treatments?

There are more simple summary slides about treating primary breast cancer. Find them by clicking on subject areas at this website page [breastcancercare.org.uk/primary treatment](http://breastcancercare.org.uk/primary treatment)

You can get Breast Cancer Care's longer free booklet  
**Treating primary breast cancer**

Call our Helpline on **0808 800 6000**