

Medicines Optimisation Advice Bulletin - November 2023

For the attention of primary and secondary care staff involved in patient care

Anastrozole to prevent breast cancer in post-menopausal women

Anastrozole is now authorised as a preventative treatment for post-menopausal women at moderate or high risk of breast cancer, as per the [MHRA update](#) that was published on 6th November 2023¹.

The licensing work was undertaken by Accord Healthcare on a not-for-profit basis, after Accord Healthcare was selected through an open competitive process. The Medicines Repurposing Programme will now work with the MHRA and the British Generic Manufacturers Association to ensure other companies that make anastrozole adopt the new licensed indication¹.

NICE CG164² - [Familial breast cancer: classification, care and managing breast cancer and related risks in people with a family history of breast cancer](#) (June 2013, updated November 2019) recommends Anastrozole for postmenopausal women at high or moderate risk of breast cancer unless they have severe osteoporosis. This was considered off-label use at the time of publication.

Further information about our local commissioning position in Norfolk and Waveney can be found on [Netformulary](#), where Anastrozole has been classified for the above indication as:

ADVICE - Specialist advice required from **secondary care** clinician with relevant expertise prior to primary care initiation

Previous NICE guidance suggested that this preventive treatment would be initiated in **secondary or tertiary care**. The NHS England announcement provided no details on how this drug will be offered to people at risk³.

Care and management of people at risk of breast cancer should continue to follow current NICE guidance.

The treatment is taken as a 1mg tablet, once a day for 5 years.

The most common side effects of the medicine are hot flushes, feeling weak, pain/stiffness in the joints, arthritis, skin rash, nausea, headache, osteoporosis, and depression. Full information about Anastrozole can be found in the Summary of Product Characteristics.

As with any medicine, the MHRA will keep the safety and effectiveness of Anastrozole under close review. Anyone who suspects they are having a side effect from this medicine are encouraged to talk to their doctor, pharmacist or nurse and report it directly to the Yellow

Card scheme, either through the [website](#) or by searching the Google Play or Apple App stores for MHRA Yellow Card.

Please email the medicines optimisation team with 'TAG' in the subject line if you have any further questions or comments - nwicb.medsqueries@nhs.net.

Many thanks for your support.

Sent on behalf of the Norfolk and Waveney Therapeutics Advisory Group

References:

1. Tens of thousands of women set to benefit from 'repurposed' NHS drug to prevent breast cancer. NHSE England Announcement, published 7/1/23. Available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/tens-of-thousands-of-women-set-to-benefit-from-repurposed-nhs-drug-to-prevent-breast-cancer/> [Accessed 10/11/23]
2. NICE CG164 - [Familial breast cancer: classification, care and managing breast cancer and related risks in people with a family history of breast cancer](#) (June 2013, updated November 2019) [Accessed 10/11/23]
3. Anastrozole: Repurposed drug could prevent thousands of breast cancer cases *BMJ* 2023; 383 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p2608> (Published 07 November 2023): *BMJ* 2023;383:p2608 [Accessed 10/11/23]