

# Here's your detailed guide on goserelin



## Goserelin (Zoladex)

**Goserelin (also called Zoladex) is a type of hormone therapy drug used as part of treatment for breast cancer in women who have not yet been through the menopause (pre-menopausal women).**

**It can also be used to try to preserve fertility during chemotherapy.**

### What are the possible side effects of goserelin?

Like all medications, goserelin can cause side effects, however, it is important to know that everyone reacts differently to medicines. Some people will have more side effects than others.

Goserelin can be given in addition to chemotherapy and other hormone therapies for breast cancer, which can make it difficult to know which side effects are being caused by which treatment. Most side effects can be managed and often improve within months of starting as your body gets used to the new medication.

### Common side effects of goserelin

#### Menopausal symptoms such as:

##### Hot flushes

Hot flushes can be a common side effect of taking goserelin. They can vary in their intensity and frequency (from feeling warm to experiencing intense heat on the upper body and face).

##### Night sweats and sleep disturbance

Night sweats can also be a common side effect of taking goserelin impacting on sleep, mood and concentration.

##### Headaches

Goserelin can sometimes cause headaches.

#### TIP

If you experience headaches tell your specialist team, or GP. They can give you advice about pain relief (such as paracetamol). If you feel dizzy, avoid driving.

#### IMPORTANT

**If your headaches don't improve, or they get worse, tell your specialist team or GP.**

**Low mood and depression**

It's not uncommon for people to feel low or depressed when diagnosed with, and treated, for breast cancer. Dealing with hormone therapy (HT) can be challenging, the side effects and menopausal symptoms experienced can also impact your mental and emotional health (such as mood, confidence and self-esteem).

**IMPORTANT**

If you need support to work through any of the emotional effects that you experience talk to your GP, specialist team or BCFNZ nurse specialist about how to get help. There are different types of support, these can include connecting with others who are going through similar experiences, counselling, and medication that can help treat low mood and depression.

**Weight gain**

You may gain weight when you are having goserelin.

**Vaginal irritation such as dryness and itching**

Vaginal irritation can include dryness and itching, this may be a mild irritation or can be severe, causing pain, and inhibiting intercourse/sexual function.

**Decreased libido (decreased sex desire)**

Decreased libido (decreased sexual desire) is a common side effect of taking hormone therapy. Decreased libido is strongly related to physical and vaginal changes (e.g. vaginal dryness and painful intercourse) and psychosocial effects such as changes in body image and self-esteem.

**Muscle or joint pain**

Muscle or joint pain can be a common side effect of goserelin.

## Other common side effects of goserelin

### Soreness at the injection site

The skin in the tummy area (the abdomen) where the goserelin injection is given may become sore, swollen and bruised.

#### IMPORTANT

Let your specialist team or GP know if this happens, pain relief may help.

### Breast swelling or tenderness

Goserelin may cause swelling or tenderness in your breast tissue. Talk to your specialist team or GP if this is an ongoing problem.

### Skin changes (spots or rash)

Goserelin can affect your skin. It may cause spots (acne) or a rash (which may be itchy or dry). Speak to your community pharmacist, GP, or specialist team, they can tell you what are the best products to use on your skin to help.

#### TIP

If your skin feels dry, try using soap-free cleansers and unperfumed moisturising cream.

### Osteoporosis (thinning of the bone)

Taking goserelin long-term reduces the amount of oestrogen in the body, and over time can increase the risk of bone thinning. Thinning of the bone – also called osteoporosis – can lead to bones becoming weaker and makes them more susceptible to breaking (fracture).

Before or not long after starting hormone therapy (HT), your specialist team will sometimes check the strength and thickness (density) of your bone with a bone density scan (DEXA scan). If your scan shows osteoporosis, your specialist team will usually prescribe the following:

- Bisphosphonates (drugs that strengthen bones and reduce the risk of bones breaking).
- Calcium and vitamin D supplements.

### Vaginal bleeding

You may experience some vaginal bleeding in the first month of starting goserelin. This is caused by the withdrawal of oestrogen.

#### IMPORTANT

**This is normal but let your specialist team or GP know if the vaginal bleeding continues.**

## Other side effects of goserelin

### Blood pressure changes

Goserelin may cause low or high blood pressure.

#### IMPORTANT

Tell your specialist team or GP if you have ever had any problems with blood pressure.

### Raised blood sugar levels

Taking goserelin may raise your blood sugar levels (increasing the risk of diabetes).

Signs of raised blood sugars include: feeling thirsty, needing to pass urine (pee) more frequently, and feeling more tired than usual.

#### IMPORTANT

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your specialist team or GP. They can do tests to check your blood sugar level and give you advice.

*If you already have diabetes, your blood sugars may be higher than usual. Your diabetic specialist team or GP will talk to you about how to manage this.*

### Changes to hair

Some women will experience hair thinning or some hair loss while taking goserelin.

## Other important information when taking goserelin

### Increased risk of blood clots

Taking hormone therapy (HT) can increase the risk of blood clots in your leg such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or a pulmonary embolism (PE) in your lung.

#### IMPORTANT

**Blood clots can be harmful. If you have any of the following symptoms get medical help immediately:**

- **Signs of a blood clot in your leg:** pain, redness, heat and swelling in your calf, leg or thigh.
- **Signs of a blood clot in your lung:** sudden shortness of breath, tightness in your chest, an unexplained cough or coughing up blood.

### Travel

Tell your specialist team, GP or community pharmacist if you're planning long-distance plane, car or train travel.

Long periods of sitting can increase your risk of blood clots. You may need to wear compression stockings (firm-fitting stockings that apply pressure to help blood flow). These can be fitted by your community pharmacist.

### Taking other medicines with goserelin

Some medicines such as herbal supplements and rongoā Māori, can affect how leuprorelin works while you are having it, making it less effective.

It is always important to check with your specialist team, GP, or community pharmacist.

### Contraception

It is important to use contraception to prevent a pregnancy (hormone therapy may harm a developing baby). Speak to your specialist team, GP or community pharmacist they will be able to provide advice:

- What types of contraception to use (such as barrier contraception).
- How long after hormone (endocrine) therapy you should continue to use contraception for.