

# Here's your detailed guide on leuprorelin



## Leuprorelin (Lucrin)

Leuprorelin (also called Lucrin) 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 leuprorelin?

Like all medications, leuprorelin 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.

Leuprorelin 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 leuprorelin

#### Menopausal symptoms such as:

##### Hot flushes

Hot flushes can be a common side effect of taking leuprorelin. 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 leuprorelin impacting on sleep, mood and concentration.

##### Headaches and dizziness

Leuprorelin can sometimes cause headaches and dizziness. These side effects usually improve over time.

#### 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.

**Fatigue (extreme feeling of tiredness)**

Persistent tiredness (fatigue) that doesn't go away with rest or sleep is a common menopausal symptom and side effect of breast cancer treatment.

**Weight gain**

You may gain weight when you are having leuporelin.

**Nausea (feeling sick)**

Leuporelin can sometimes cause nausea (feeling sick), this is usually mild.

**TIP**

If you experience nausea tell your specialist team, or GP they can give anti-sickness medication that can help.

**Diarrhoea**

Having leuporelin may cause diarrhoea (passing more stools (poo) than normal for you).

**TIP**

If you have diarrhoea, it's important to drink plenty of fluids. Your GP or specialist team may also prescribe medication to help with diarrhoea.

**Fluid retention / oedema (fluid build-up)**

Swelling can also occur in the ankles, feet and lower legs. Swelling usually improves over time.

**TIP**

To help manage mild to moderate fluid retention:

- Avoid salty or processed foods that can contribute to fluid retention.
- Elevate the head whilst sleeping to help with eye swelling.
- Elevate the swollen area
- Avoid sitting and standing for long periods of time.

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**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.

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**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.

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**Muscle or joint pain**

Muscle or joint pain can be a common side effect of leuporelin, especially when you first start. This is due to the reduction in oestrogen, however it usually improves over time.

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## Other common side effects of leuporelin

### Redness, bruising and soreness at the injection site

Some redness, bruising and soreness may occur at the injection site after you have been given the injection. This usually disappears within a few days.

#### IMPORTANT

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

### Breast swelling or tenderness

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

### Abnormal sweating

Leuporelin can cause excessive sweating that is not related to heat or exercise. Talk to your specialist team or GP if this is an ongoing problem.

### Osteoporosis (thinning of the bone)

Taking leuporelin long term (several months / years) can reduce 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.

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 leuporelin. 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 leuporelin

### Blood pressure changes and high cholesterol

Leuporelin can cause high blood pressure and high cholesterol in some people. Your specialist team or GP will monitor and treat if necessary

### Raised blood sugar levels

Taking leuporelin 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.*

### Effects on the liver

Taking leuporelin can sometimes cause changes to your liver.

These changes are usually mild and unlikely to affect how your liver works. Your specialist team or GP will request blood tests to check how well your liver is working

## Other important information when taking leuprorelin

### 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 leuprorelin

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.