

NOTICE: ANASTROZOLE AVAILABILITY AND THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVE



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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The Tertiary and Quaternary Essential Medicines List (EML) recommends the use of the aromatase inhibitors for the management of adjuvant and metastatic breast cancer. The aromatase inhibitors recommended are: anastrozole, letrozole and exemestane. See table below outlining the NEMLC recommendation.

MEDICINE	INDICATION	NEMLC OUTCOMES
<p><b>Aromatase inhibitors</b> Anastrozole, Letrozole, Exemestane</p>	Adjuvant breast cancer.	<b>Approved</b> for use in women with confirmed intolerance to tamoxifen, i.e. thrombo-embolic disease or endometrial hyperplasia (proven on ultrasound).
<p><b>Aromatase inhibitors</b> Anastrozole, Letrozole, Exemestane</p>	Metastatic breast cancer.	<b>Approved</b> for use as second-line therapy after tamoxifen in advanced breast cancer in postmenopausal women who do not have visceral metastases.

Anastrozole and letrozole are non-steroidal aromatase inhibitors and bind to the aromatase enzyme in a reversible manner, while exemestane is a steroidal aromatase inhibitor that binds to the aromatase enzyme in an irreversible manner. Due to their differing mechanisms of action, as well as different pricing, anastrozole and letrozole are generally used initially, with exemestane reserved for patients who have disease progression. Anastrozole tablets, which is on the National Contract from Accord Healthcare (Pty) Ltd, is currently unavailable.

**Procurement information**

Measures are currently underway to obtain quotations from alternative anastrozole suppliers; however, in the interim, an alternative aromatase inhibitor can be utilised, i.e. letrozole which has the same mechanism of action as anastrozole.

**Note: Any switching must be done in consultation with a specialist.**

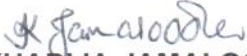
NSN	Product Description	Supplier Name	Price
180142507	Letrozole; 2.5mg; Tablet; 30 Tablets	Aurogen SA (Pty) Ltd	R27.10

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**Communication and dissemination of information**

Provinces and Healthcare Facilities are requested to distribute and communicate this information in consultation with the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committees. Kindly share with all healthcare professionals and relevant stakeholders.

Kind regards,



**MS KHADIJA JAMALOODIEN**

**CHIEF DIRECTOR: SECTOR WIDE PROCUREMENT**

**DATE:** 22/11/2025