

Taxane containing chemotherapy is effective for women with operable early breast cancer

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| Clinical question | How effective is taxane* containing chemotherapy for women with operable early breast cancer? |
| Bottom line | Compared to non-taxane containing chemotherapy, taxane containing chemotherapy improves overall survival and disease-free survival in pre- or post-menopausal women with early breast cancer (cancer that has not spread beyond the breast or nearby lymph nodes and is potentially curable by surgery alone). |
| Caveat | The review did not identify a subgroup of patients where taxane containing treatment may have been more or less effective. Dosage and scheduling of the taxanes used were not clearly defined so determining the optimal use of taxanes must await the next generation of studies. |
| Context | Breast cancer is the commonest cancer in women (23% of all cancers), with an estimated 1.15 million new cases and over 411,000 deaths reported worldwide in 2002. Taxanes can inhibit cancer cells dividing and reproducing. Possible associated adverse effects include nausea, vomiting and increased risk of infections. |
| Cochrane Systematic Review | Ferguson T. et al. Taxanes for adjuvant treatment of early breast cancer. Cochrane Reviews 2007, Issue 4. Art No: CD004421. DOI:10.1002/14651858.CD004421.pub2. This review included 12 of the 20 studies identified, involving 18,304 participants. |
| Pearls No. 65, May 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy | |

*Taxanes are an adjuvant to surgical treatment of early breast cancer, not an alternative.

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