Caring for Breast Cancer Survivors

What to do:

• Annual history and physical exam including a thorough breast or chest wall exam
• Patient education about potential symptoms of recurrence, e.g. new breast lumps, bone pain, persistent headaches, worsening dyspnea
• Annual mammography (excludes women with bilateral mastectomy)
• Recommend regular gynecological follow up
• For patients on aromatase inhibitors:
  — DEXA scans every 2 years
  — Optimize bone health with calcium and vitamin D
  — Consider denosumab every 6 months for primary fracture prevention

What NOT to do:

• “Routine” lab tests
• Tumor markers
• Breast MRI (unless the patient meets high-risk criteria, e.g., BRCA mutation, prior chest irradiation)
• Other imaging tests for screening in the absence of new symptoms (e.g., CXR, PET, CT, bone scan)
• Screening transvaginal ultrasound

What to know:

In most patients, continue hormonal therapy (tamoxifen or an aromatase inhibitor) for a total of 10 years

ABOUT AROMATASE INHIBITORS

• Drugs: Anastrozole (Arimidex) 1 mg daily
  Letrozole (Femara) 2.5 mg daily
  Exemestane (Aromasin) 25 mg daily

• If side effects intolerable consider (a) trying a different AI or (b) switching to tamoxifen
• Potential harms include osteoporosis, hyperlipidemia and cardiovascular events

ABOUT TAMOXIFEN

• Potential harms include:
  — VTE
  — cataracts
  — endometrial cancer

• Check drug interactions (e.g., warfarin, SSRIs/SNRIs)

Hormonal therapy | Common side effects | Treatment
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Aromatase Inhibitors | musculoskeletal symptoms (arthritis, myalgia, bone pain) | NSAIDS, glucosamine chondroitin, exercise, acupuncture; imaging if progressive
Aromatase Inhibitors, Tamoxifen | hot flashes | acupuncture, avoid triggers, consider venlafaxine (Effexor) 37.5mg
Aromatase Inhibitors, Tamoxifen | vaginal dryness, sexual dysfunction | non-hormonal moisturizers and lubricants (Hyal GYN gel, vitamin E, coconut oil); low-dose vaginal estrogens (Vagifem, Estring)
Tamoxifen | vaginal bleeding | endometrial biopsy or hysteroscopy, usually by gyn

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.mskcc.org/hcp-education-training/survivorship/provider-education

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