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Cancer Advances: Hormonal Therapy Helps Early Stage Breast Cancer Patients Lower Risk of Recurrence After Surgery

From the December 15, 2002 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* Doctors have known for several years that the hormonal cancer treatment *tamoxifen* can help reduce the risk that a woman's breast cancer will return after surgery. However, this benefit has only been seen in women who are already past menopause, leaving younger patients with fewer options. Typically, pre-menopausal women receive chemotherapy after surgery to reduce their risk, resulting in serious and sometimes permanent side effects.Recently, though, scientists have discovered that combining tamoxifen with another hormonal treatment called goserelin may reduce the risk of cancer returning even in women who haven't reached menopause. In a new study led by Dr. Raimund Jakesz at the University of Vienna in Austria, researchers found that breast cancer patients who received goserelin and tamoxifen after surgery were less likely to have their cancer return than patients who received the standard chemotherapy. Goserelin and tamoxifen also allowed patients to avoid many of the side effects caused by chemotherapy, including nausea and hair loss.**What Does This Mean For Patients?**According to Dr. Jakesz, more research needs to be completed before scientists can decide whether hormonal therapy should be used for patients outside of clinical trials. However, he said that the combination of goserelin and tamoxifen may eventually be an important option for women with early stage breast cancer. Patients who are interested in learning more about clinical trials of hormonal therapies should speak with their doctor.