

# Experts in Skin & Hair

## Dutasteride

### What is Dutasteride?

Dutasteride is a type of medication known as a 5 alpha reductase inhibitor (5ARI), which inhibits the conversion of Testosterone to the more highly active Dihydrotestosterone (DHT). By diminishing DHT, conditions that are exacerbated by male hormone levels can be halted and potentially reversed. Its mechanism of action in women is unknown but it may be altering hormones in some way.

### What conditions is Dutasteride used to treat?

Dutasteride is licensed to treat Male Pattern Hair Loss (1mg dose) and Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (5mg), enlargement of the prostate that often effects urine flow. It is unlicensed in women but has been used as experimental treatment for **Female Pattern Hair Loss** and **Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia**.

### How long would I need to stay on this medication?

Dutasteride needs to be continued to have long term benefit. In female pattern hair loss, one would continue for as long as one wants to maintain their current hair density. When Dutasteride is used experimentally in conditions like Female Pattern Hair Loss and Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia, it is typically used for 6-18 months to assess for benefit and then continued if it helps the underlying condition.

### What are the side effects?

Dutasteride is very well tolerated. Most patients will be unaware that they are taking a medication at all and will experience no problems. The original trials did not include women and therefore there is no clinical trial data on side effects. Sexual side effects can occur with decreased sex drive (libido). Breast tissue tenderness and breast tissue enlargement can occur. A very small number may experience a lowering of mood. In several published cohorts of women taken Dutasteride for FFA, there have been no concerning signals but this does not exclude the possibility of rare side effects.

### What about hormone based cancers?

There have been no published reports of cancer due to Dutasteride in women. However, we don't know what this medication could be doing to female hormone levels implicated in hormone driven cancer processes, eg ovary, breast, uterine. If you have a strong family history of any of these conditions, it may be best to avoid this medication.

### Important Considerations Before Use:

#### Pregnancy:

Dutasteride should not be used by pregnant women, as it can cause abnormalities in a developing male foetus. Effective and reliable contraception is recommended during treatment in pre-menopausal women.

**Other Medications:** Inform your doctor about any other medications you are taking, as interactions can occur.

### Dosage and Administration:

The typical starting dose for hair loss may vary; follow your healthcare provider's instructions.

- Dutasteride is usually taken once daily, with or without food.
- It may take several months to see noticeable improvement in hair growth.



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## **Monitoring and Follow-Up:**

Regular follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider are important to monitor your response to treatment and manage any side effects. Your doctor may recommend periodic blood tests to check your hormone levels and liver function.

## **Lifestyle and Support:**

In addition to medication, consider incorporating a healthy diet, stress management, and gentle hair care practices to support hair health. Connecting with support groups or counsellors may also be beneficial for emotional support during your hair loss journey.

## **When to Seek Medical Advice:**

Contact your healthcare provider if you experience severe side effects, signs of an allergic reaction (such as rash or swelling), or if you are planning to become pregnant.

## **Conclusion:**

Dutasteride may offer hope for women experiencing hair loss due to hormonal factors. It is essential to use this medication under the guidance of a qualified healthcare professional to ensure safe and effective treatment.

For more information or specific questions about your health situation, please consult your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

