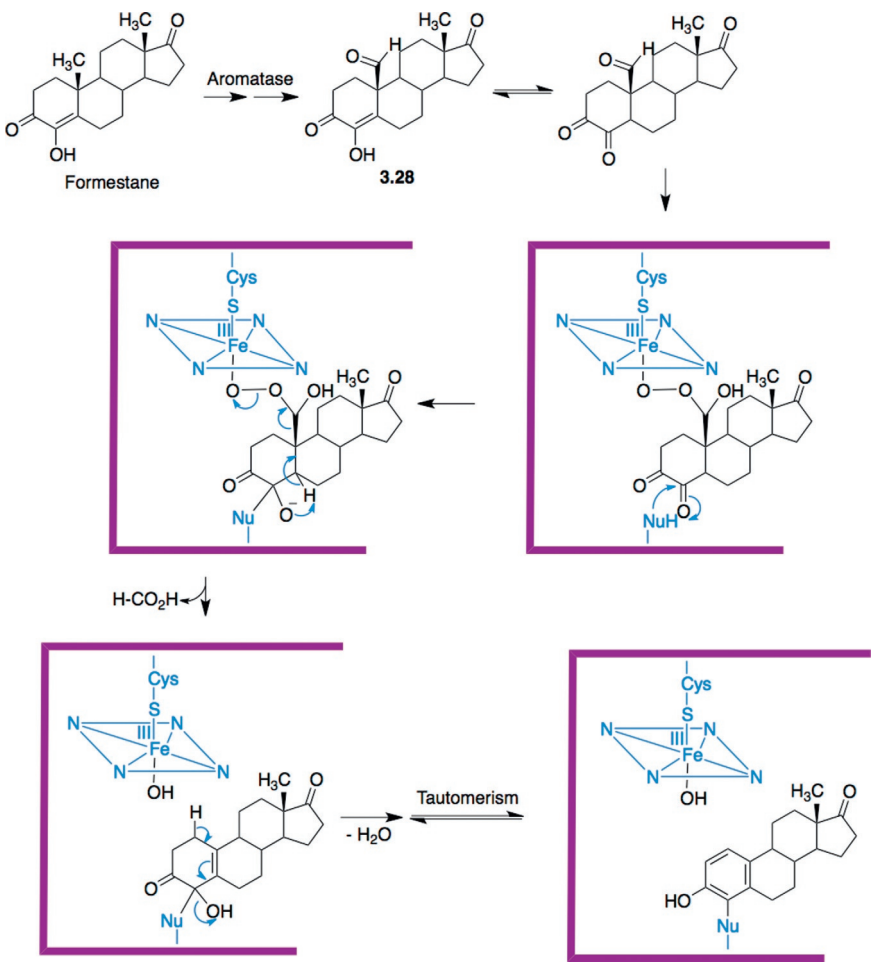

FIGURE 3.20

Aromatase inhibition by formestane, a 4-hydroxyandrostenedione derivative.

highly unsaturated compounds, the most relevant is the 6-methylene derivative, known as exemestane.[38] The use of testolactone (Teslac®) in the treatment of breast cancer started in 1960, although its ability to inhibit aromatase was not discovered until 1979. It is a weak inhibitor with a moderate clinical response that has precluded its widespread use. Exemestane (Aromasin®), the first example of an irreversible aromatase inhibitor, was reported in 1987 and approved in some countries for the treatment of advanced breast cancer in postmenopausal women in whom antiestrogenic therapy has failed. It has the advantages over formestane of being more potent and, especially, allowing oral administration,[39] although it has important adverse effects.