

Having hormone therapy for prostate cancer

Department of urology

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Information for patients

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Why have I been prescribed hormones?

Prostate cancer needs the male hormone, testosterone, to grow. Testosterone is produced naturally in men. The aim of the hormone therapy is to reduce the levels of testosterone to slow down the growth of the cancer and to shrink it.

Hormone therapy on its own will not cure your prostate cancer. The aim of hormone therapy is to control your cancer and delay or reduce any symptoms caused by your cancer.

Hormone therapy can also be used with other treatments such as radiotherapy, to make them more effective.

Your doctor or specialist nurse will be able to explain why you have been prescribed hormone therapy.

Types of hormone therapy

Hormone therapy is usually given in tablet form to start with, and continues in the form of injections or implants organised by your GP surgery.

However, for some men injections only are prescribed and these men do not need to take tablets. These are often prescribed for men who have lots of problems related to their prostate cancer or have a history of heart problems.

You may need to go back onto the tablet form of hormone therapy as well as injections in the future. This is usually if your cancer has grown.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

How long will I need hormone therapy?

If you are having hormone therapy with radiotherapy, you may be on hormone therapy for at least three months before you start radiotherapy and for a total of up to three years afterwards.

Your oncologist (doctor specialising in cancer) will decide this and let you know.

If you are having hormone therapy only, you are likely to be on this for the rest of your life.

Where do I get the tablets or injections?

If you are having **tablets**, these will be prescribed by your hospital doctor and you will be able to get them from the hospital pharmacy. If you are having **injections**, you will need to make an appointment with your GP to have the first injection two weeks after starting the tablets. You will need to take the tablets for a total of 28 days and then you can stop them.

You will then have the injections either once a month or once every three months at your GP surgery. It is very important that you follow this plan. If necessary the injection can be given a few days either side of the due date, but no more than this.

You started taking tablets (bicalutamide) today.....

You need to have the first injection on or around.....

You can use the table below to record when your next few injections are due. There is also space for you to make a note of any problems so that you remember to tell your nurse or GP.

Date injection due	Any problems?

If you have been prescribed **injections only** and have been given the first injection in clinic, these injections will continue once a month with your GP. You can use the table above to help you remember.

When you leave the clinic you will be given a letter to take to your GP as soon as you can. This letter advises the GP which injection to prescribe and how often to give it. The GP receptionist will need this information to book your appointment.

Will I get side effects?

As with all treatments, there are possible side effects. With hormone therapy most of the side effects are caused by low testosterone levels.

You may notice:

- hot flushes
- tiredness (fatigue)
- changes to your sex life: problems getting an erection, reduced sex drive (libido)
- weight gain
- loss of body hair
- swelling and tenderness around your chest
- loss of body hair
- mood swings

Are there any long-term effects?

Bone thinning

If you have hormone therapy for a long period of time, you may get bone thinning. If bone thinning is severe it can lead to a condition called osteoporosis. This means that you may be more likely to get broken bones (fractures).

You can ask your GP to assess your risk of osteoporosis. They do this by asking you some questions. Your GP may then prescribe you some medication to improve your bone health.

There are some things that you can do to improve your bone health and help prevent problems:

- **Diet:** try to eat a diet that is rich in calcium (found in dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, nuts and oily fish where you eat the bones) and vitamin D (found in leafy green vegetables, oily fish, red meat and eggs).
- **Exercise:** try to do some gentle weight-bearing exercise such as walking, climbing stairs, dancing, as well as some gentle resistance exercise such as lifting light weights or using elastic resistance bands.

Other risks

Being on long-term hormone therapy can increase your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke. This is not common, but you may wish to make some small changes to your lifestyle to help reduce your risk. If you have a history of heart problems, please let your doctor know before you start hormone therapy.

There are some things that you can do to reduce your risk:

- Diet: try to eat a healthy, balanced diet and drink less alcohol.
- Exercise: try to be more physically active.
- If you smoke, ask your doctor or nurse about help in giving up.

You can ask your GP to assess your heart health. Your GP may wish to monitor you to make sure that you do not have (or develop) any problems.

Are there any alternatives?

Testosterone is produced in the testicles. Some men choose to have surgery to remove the inner part of their testicles so that testosterone is not produced. This is only suitable for men who are on hormone therapy for the rest of their lives. Please speak to your doctor or specialist nurse if you would like further information about this.

Questions

If you have any concerns or questions about hormone therapy, please contact the prostate cancer nursing team (key workers).

Telephone: 0116 258 8328

(Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm)

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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