

Starting hormone treatments (tablets / injections) for prostate cancer

This leaflet has been provided to help answer of the questions you may have about hormone therapy for prostate cancer.

Why do I need this treatment?

Prostate cancer is fed by the male hormone, testosterone. Hormone medications block the production of testosterone and aim to stop the growth and spread of the cancer, in some cases shrinking it.

This may be your main treatment or be given in combination with other treatments such as radiotherapy (treatment by rays) or brachytherapy (treatment by radioactive seeds). Your doctor or specialist nurse will explain your treatment plan to you.

How do these drugs work?

Medical hormone therapy consists of two main drugs:

- LHRH-agonists stop the production of testosterone in the testicles. They are usually given once a month or every three months, as an injection into the abdomen, arm, leg or buttock. This is usually given by your GP or practice nurse.
- Anti-androgens block the activity of testosterone on the prostate cancer. These may be given alongside LHRH- agonists to block the tumour flare or on their own in certain circumstances.

Your doctor or specialist nurse will explain which drug you have been given and why. You will also be given an information sheet about your particular medication.

What are the side effects?

These may include tiredness, loss of libido (sexual desire) impotence (difficulty in getting an erection, hot flushes, weight gain, sweating and an increase in breast size or tender breasts.

Some anti-androgens can cause severe diarrhoea and you should contact your GP or the hospital if this happens so that your medication may be altered.

When do I start taking the medication?

- Start taking the hormone tablets (Bicalutamide) the day they are prescribed (unless you are told otherwise). The pharmacist will explain the dose and timings of the medication. You will be given 28 days' supply so you may need to get a repeat prescription from your GP.
- Make an appointment with your GP / Practice Nurse for the first hormone injection. You should have the injection 3 - 7 days after starting the tablets. The first injection is likely to be a short acting injection that lasts 4 weeks. After 4 weeks, if you have been ok with the first injection you can then be switched to the longer-acting injection, which is a 12 weekly injection.
- Continue taking the hormone tablets for 21 days after the first injection. This is to stop you getting a tumour flare.
- At the end of the 21 days you can stop the tablets but continue the injections either monthly or three monthly.

What happens next?

You will be given an appointment so that we can check your PSA blood test. This allows us to see if the medication is working.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any worries or questions please do not hesitate to contact the specialist Urology Oncology nursing team:

Tel 0118 322 7905

There is an answer machine so please leave a message and we will get back to you.

If you require this document in another language or format, please call 0118 322 7905.

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
London Road
Reading RG1 5AN
0118 322 5111 (switchboard)
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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