

# Hormone therapy injections for prostate cancer

Urology

## Who is this information for?

For men with prostate cancer which is suitable for treatment with hormone therapy. This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about this treatment option.

## What is hormone therapy?

Hormones are natural substances found in the body and hormone therapy is a way of treating prostate cancer by changing the hormone balance in the body. The male hormone testosterone, controls the growth and development of sexual organs and many male characteristics such as a deep voice, muscle strength and hair growth.

Hormone injections work by stopping the brain telling the body to make testosterone. Without the testosterone, the prostate cancer cells cannot grow.

Prostate cancer needs testosterone to grow and without it the prostate cancer can shrink.

## What are the benefits of having hormone therapy?

This treatment can help to stop your cancer progressing and can help to control pain caused by spread of the cancer to nearby glands or bones.

- Hormone therapy is an effective treatment for prostate cancer
- Hormone therapy can treat prostate cancer wherever the cancer cells are within the body.
- Hormone therapy can be used alongside other treatments such as radiotherapy to make them more effective.
- Hormone therapy can assist in reducing some of the symptoms of prostate cancer such as urinary symptoms.

## What are the disadvantages of having hormone therapy?

- It can cause side effects that can have an impact on your day to day life. Possible side effects are discussed later in this leaflet.
- Hormone therapy alone will not cure prostate cancer. It may keep the cancer under control for an unknown period of time.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

# Hormone Injections

There are two types of injections.

- LHRH agonists (luteinizing hormone releasing hormone antagonists)
- GnRH antagonists (gonadotrophin-releasing hormone antagonists).

Common LHRH agonists are

- Goserelin (Brand name Zoladex )
- Leuprorelin (brand name Prostag)
- Triptorelin (Brand name Decapeptyl)

Common GnRH antagonist

- Degarelix (brand name Firmagon)

The best choice of hormone injection for you will be discussed with you by your healthcare professional.

## How are LHRH agonists and GnRH antagonists given?

Some of the injections are given just under the skin on your stomach or top of the arm, whilst others need to be given into the muscle of the buttocks. Most men do not find the injections too uncomfortable. Shortly before the first injection you will need to start taking a hormone tablet called Bicalutamide or Cyproterone Acetate. This will usually continue for 2 weeks after the first injection.

The first injection is usually given by one of the urology nurse specialists at the hospital in the urology outpatients department. He/she will be able to answer any questions you have.

After the injection, you will be given a letter on the day stating what treatment you have had. You are requested to take this letter to your GP, so that they are made aware quickly that you have started treatment and they can begin to arrange the follow-up injections. Your GP will also be notified via a further letter sent from the hospital.

Your GP may choose to give a different branded injection to the one that you were given in the clinic. This is ok as long as you and your GP are aware of which brand was given and when it is due again.

Only the first injection is given at the hospital, all further injections are given by your GP or practice nurse.

You can discuss with your GP whether you want to receive the injection every 4 weeks, every 3 months or every 6 months. This is your choice and doesn't alter your treatment outcome. You will need to continue with your injections even if you feel well and you should continue with the injections unless your consultant tells you to stop.

You should make every effort to have your injection on the correct date. If you don't think you will be able to make this date (if you are on holiday for example) you should speak to your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible. If required the injection can be given up to 1 week early, but it should never be given late.

## What would happen if I decided not to have this treatment?

Your consultant will have explained the different treatment options available to you and what would happen if you decided not to have any treatment at all.

The choice about which treatment is best for you will be made together with your doctor. This will be based on the risks and benefits of the treatments and your individual circumstances.

Without treatment your cancer may progress and it may be difficult to control any symptoms you have.

These are the treatment options available to you;

- Hormone injections, which reduce the testosterone level in your body.
- Surgical removal of the part of the testicles, which produces testosterone called a bilateral orchidectomy.

Both options are equally effective and can be discussed with your urology team.

## Are there any side effects and long term side effects involved in having hormone injections?

Yes, there are side effects to nearly all treatments. Therefore you must consider the following side effects before deciding to undergo this treatment. The list of side effects below can all potentially become long term side effects as the medication can affect each person differently.

- Hot flushes and night sweats – these are common and may be severe in the first six to 12 months. You may also notice that you have to shave less often.
- Breast swelling and tenderness.
- Weight gain
- A reduced sex drive
- Impotence – you will probably experience impotence once you start treatment. This is the inability to achieve an erection.
- Thinning of the bones
- Tiredness
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Cardiovascular risks
- Lack of concentration or memory loss

Less common side effects are:

- Joint pain
- Changes in blood pressure
- Skin rashes

There may be some treatment that can be given to you if any of these side effects are particularly troublesome. Speak to your GP or consultant or you can contact the Specialist Nurses on 01902 694467.

## Will these injections affect other medication I am taking?

It is unlikely that these injections will affect any other medication you are taking. Your GP will advise you of changes to your medication prescription.

## Where can I get further information and support?

Many people living with cancer may worry about what the future holds. Concerns about tests and treatments are common. It may help if you make a list of your concerns so that you can ask your consultant.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment, please speak to your doctor, or contact the Specialist Nurses on telephone number 01902 694467. There is a 24 hour answer phone if you ring outside normal working hours.

There is also a Wolverhampton Prostate Cancer Support Group, which is open to anyone affected by prostate cancer. If you wish to speak to someone receiving the same treatment this can be arranged for you either through the support group or your Nurse Practitioner.

## Useful Contacts

### **The Prostate Cancer Charity**

Tel. 0845 300 8383

Email: [info@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:info@prostate-cancer.org.uk)

Website: [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk)

### **Prostate Cancer Support Association**

Tel. 0845 6010766

### **Institute of Cancer Research**

Tel. 020 7352 8133

Website: [www.icr.ac.uk](http://www.icr.ac.uk)

### **Cancer Backup Information Service**

Freephone 0808 800 1234

### **The Sexual Dysfunction Association**

Tel. 0870 7743571

Website: [www.impotence.org.uk](http://www.impotence.org.uk)

### **Cancer Help UK**

Freephone 0800 226 237

Website: [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)

### **Wolverhampton Prostate cancer support group**

01902 694467

Website: [wolverhamptonprostatecancersupportgroup.org.uk](http://wolverhamptonprostatecancersupportgroup.org.uk)

### **Brothers reaching Out To/For Support**

(Prostate support group aimed at black men and ethnic minorities)

Email - [brosetnetwork148@gmail.com](mailto:brosetnetwork148@gmail.com)

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。