

Watchful waiting for prostate cancer

Urology Department

Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is about watchful waiting for prostate cancer. It gives you information on why this may be suitable for you, its risks and benefits and what to do if you change your mind and decide you want treatment for your cancer. If you would like more detailed information, please contact one of our urology clinical nurse specialists.

What is watchful waiting?

Watchful waiting is a way of monitoring prostate cancer that is not causing any symptoms or problems. The aim is to monitor the cancer over the long term because prostate cancer is often slow growing and may not cause you any symptoms or problems in your lifetime. You will not start treatment until you get symptoms, such as problems passing urine or bone pain. At this point, we will probably recommend that you have a treatment called hormone therapy to help manage your symptoms.

Watchful waiting may be suitable for you if your prostate cancer is:

- Not currently causing you any symptoms or problems
- You have other health conditions so may not be fit enough for treatment such as radiotherapy or surgery
- You are an older man and your prostate cancer may not ever cause you any problems in your lifetime or shorten your lifespan

Treatments for prostate cancer, like radiotherapy or surgery, can cause problems with erections, passing urine and bowel problems. For some men, these side effects may be long term and may have a significant impact on their quality of life.

If you decide to go for watchful waiting:

- you will not have any treatment for your prostate cancer
- therefore, you will avoid the side effects of treatment

Your doctor or nurse will either see you at the hospital or ask your GP check your [prostate specific antigen \(PSA\) blood test](#) every four to 12 months. This will give them a good idea about any changes to your prostate cancer.

You should let your GP or doctor or nurse at the hospital know if you have any symptoms or changes to your health. Things to look out for include:

- Changes to your urinary habits, for example, blood in your urine and problems passing urine
- Changes to your bowel habits
- New problems with erections
- New aches and pains in your back or bones
- New swelling in your legs

If you start getting any of these symptoms, you may need to have some further tests to see if your cancer has spread and you may be offered treatment. The most common treatment to help improve these symptoms is hormone therapy as it shrinks the cancer cells, wherever they are in the body. If any changes are picked up on these tests, or you have any new or different symptoms, we may recommend that you start hormone therapy.

What are the benefits of watchful waiting?

- As watchful waiting does not involve having treatment, you will avoid the physical side effects of treatment and you should be able to enjoy your normal life and activities.
- You will not need to have invasive tests such as regular prostate biopsies.
- Some men may never need treatment.

What are the risks?

- Some men may become anxious or worry about their cancer changing and the possibility of developing symptoms. Partners and family also often worry about their loved one and find it hard to understand why they are not having treatment.
- There is a chance that the cancer may grow and change more quickly than expected. If this happens, you can start treatment such as hormone therapy to control the cancer.

What if I change my mind and want treatment?

If you want to discuss other options for managing your prostate cancer, contact your specialist nurse. The nurse can arrange an appointment for you to see one of the specialist nurses, or your consultant if you prefer, to discuss whether there are any treatments that are suitable.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

If you are feeling worried or anxious, it may help to talk to family or friends about how you are feeling. You could also speak to your doctor or nurse. You may be able to get support through [support groups](#). There is a prostate cancer support group in Dudley (see details in 'Can I find out more?' section).

- Eating a healthy diet will benefit your overall health and reduce your risk of other health problems. There is some evidence that certain foods may slow down the growth of prostate cancer or reduce the risk of it returning after treatment (please ask your nurse if you would like a diet sheet).
- Physical activity is important for your general well-being and can help with feelings of anxiety or depression. It is not clear whether exercise can help to slow down the growth of prostate cancer.

If you are a partner, family member or friend of a man affected by prostate cancer, you may also need some support. All the services mentioned here are also open to you.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following:

Cancer Support at the White House

10 Ednam Road

Dudley, DY1 1JX

Tel: 01384 231232. Fax: 01384 459975

Email: info@support4cancer.org.uk

<http://www.support4cancer.org.uk/index.html>

Provides practical help, emotional support and information to people with cancer, their families, friends and carers in the borough of Dudley and surrounding areas. A monthly prostate cancer support group is held every third Tuesday at 2pm.

Prostate Cancer UK

Helpline: 0800 074 8383

<http://prostatecanceruk.org/>

Information and support for patients with prostate cancer.

Cancer Research UK

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/>

This website has information on active surveillance and living with cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment

London, SE1 7UQ

Freephone helpline: 0808 808 0000 (9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday)

www.macmillan.org.uk

Practical, emotional and financial support for people with cancer, family and friends.

Healthtalkonline.org

<http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/cancer/prostate-cancer/topics>

Watch, listen to or read personal experiences of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer-of-the-prostate/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Information about prostate cancer and treatment.

Contact information for urology clinical nurse specialists

If you have any questions, you would like more information, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Urology clinical nurse specialists on 01384 456111 ext. 2873 or

mobile 07787 512834 (8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

Ward C6 on 01384 244282

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/urology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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