

# Minimizing the Side Effects of Androgen Blocking Treatment for Prostate Cancer

## Androgen Blocking Treatment

Androgen Blocking Treatment (i.e. Lupron, Eligard) is used to slow the progression of advanced prostate cancer by eliminating testosterone production or blocking it at a cellular level. There are a number of possible side effects associated with a low testosterone. Not everyone experiences these side effects and some have more side effects than others. Management of some side effects is imperfect, however there is much that can be done to reduce their impact.

### Side Effects

- Decreased sex drive
- Erectile dysfunction
- Loss of muscle strength
- Bone density loss
- Weight gain, change in fat distribution
- Hot flashes
- Breast tenderness
- Memory decline
- Breast growth
- Depression
- Changes in blood pressure
- Elevated cholesterol, blood sugar



### Minimizing Side Effects

**DECREASED SEX DRIVE** can have long-term consequences and weaken penile erections due to atrophy. It is recommended to induce erections 2-3 times per week with the assistance of medications, a pump, or with injections – with or without sexual intercourse. Discuss with your doctor whether you should be placed on a daily phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) inhibitor.

**STRENGTH TRAINING** can minimize side effects of muscle loss, improve memory, depression, and increase your metabolism. Lift weights to the point of maximum fatigue twice a week, focusing on every major muscle group. Do aerobic exercise 30 minutes most days.

**MAKE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES** to control weight gain. Manage your caloric intake.



Rev. 6/16/15 Reference: Promoting Wellness for Prostate Cancer Patients, fourth ed. Mark A. Moyad, MD, MPH

## Minimizing Side Effects

**HOT FLASHES** may be minimized by lifestyle changes.

- 1) Hot beverages, spicy foods and excess alcohol or caffeine may trigger hot flashes.
- 2) Controlled, deep, slow abdominal breathing (6-8 breaths per minute for at least 15 minutes twice a day or at the beginning of a hot flash). This is known as “paced respiration” and may decrease hot flashes and their severity.
- 3) Try to stay cool by reducing room temperature, drinking cool beverages, wear loose-fitting clothing. A rise in body temperature may trigger a hot flash.
- 4) Soy products (several servings a day 30 to 40 gm). As dosage increases so do GI side effects
- 5) Flaxseed powder 2-3 tablespoons per day (may experience bloating and diarrhea)
- 6) Maintain a hot flash diary to assess the severity and frequency of the hot flashes and to assess the response of treatments to include time of day, severity, and activity instigating the hot flash.

**OSTEOPOROSIS** may be reduced by

- 1) Weight lifting or resistance exercise (twice a week), aerobic exercise. (30 min most days).
- 2) Vitamins:

Calcium 1,200 mg per day (do not exceed 1,200 mg per day as this may increase your risk for cardiovascular disease).

Vitamin D 800-1,000 IU

**Bayer Citracal® Slow Release** contains the recommended amounts in two pills taken in the morning with food.

*The body can only absorb 500 mg of calcium at a time so a slow release formula taken once a day allows for better absorption and better compliance with taking the supplement.*

- 3) Bisphosphonates may have to be prescribed if there is evidence of loss of bone density. Bone density testing should be performed yearly while on androgen blocking treatment.

### ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE / BLOOD

**SUGAR/CHOLESTEROL:** See your primary care doctor regularly to monitor your blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol. You may need a statin drug to lower your cholesterol and Metformin to manage the rise in glucose.