

# 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 the use of these medications. 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, increased risk of fracture
- 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

**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.

## Minimizing Side Effects

### **MINIMIZING LOSS OF BONE DENSITY (osteoporosis)**

Loss of bone density may increase the risk for fracture. Ways to minimize the loss of bone density include:

- 1) Weight lifting or resistance exercise (twice a week), walking (30 min most days). Presbyterian offers a free 16 week exercise program for cancer patients. Ask your doctor or call 214-345-4838.
- 2) Vitamins:  
**Calcium 1,200 mg per day** (from food & supplements) Calcium is best absorbed when taken in 500-600 mg dose (2-3 times a day) . Calcium citrate supplements can be taken with or without meals. Calcium carbonate must be taken with a meal.  
**Vitamin D3 800-1,000 IU per day**  
**Bayer Citracal® Slow Release 1200** contains the recommended amounts of calcium and D3 in one pill.
- 3) Bone density testing (Dexascan) should be performed before you start androgen blocking treatment if you are going to be on it more than a year and then yearly while on androgen blocking treatment. D3 blood testing may be needed as well. Ask your primary care doctor about getting a Dexascan and D3 blood level.
- 4) Bisphosphonates may have to be prescribed if there is evidence of loss of bone density.
- 5) Visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation website for more information ([www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org))

### **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.

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

