

# Prostate Cancer Active Surveillance

## Urology Department

## Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is about active surveillance (monitoring) of 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 cancer nurse specialists.

### What is active surveillance?

Active surveillance is a way of monitoring prostate cancer to avoid or delay unnecessary treatment in men with less aggressive cancer. Treatments for prostate cancer can cause side effects which can affect quality of life. The most common side effects include problems getting and keeping an erection (erectile dysfunction) and problems controlling or passing urine (incontinence).

Prostate cancer can be slow growing and for many men, the disease may never progress or cause any symptoms. In other words, some men with prostate cancer will never need any treatment. Monitoring the cancer through active surveillance can delay or even avoid side effects from treatment.

## Who is it suitable for?

It is suitable for men with low risk, early stage prostate cancer that is contained within the prostate gland (**localised prostate cancer**). It may also be suitable for some men with medium risk cancer.

Men with **low** risk cancer will have a PSA level of less than 10 ng/ml and a Gleason score of 3+3 -six or less. We will look at the amount of cancer cells found in each biopsy and ideally, they should show that there was cancer in less than half of the samples taken.

**Medium** risk cancer has a PSA level of 10 to 20 ng/ml or a Gleason score of 3+4 -seven.

If you would like more information about PSA levels and Gleason scores, please ask your urology clinical nurse specialist.

Your specialist will discuss with you whether active surveillance is an option for you.

## What does it involve?

Active surveillance means we will monitor your prostate cancer with regular tests, rather than treating it straight away. The tests aim to find any changes that suggest that the cancer is growing. If this happens, treatment would be offered, with the aim of getting rid of the cancer completely.

## What tests will I have?

You will be monitored as follows:

- regular PSA blood tests, usually every three months
- possible repeat prostate biopsies every 18 months to two years, depending on individual circumstances
- occasional MRI scans of the prostate

We are constantly learning about prostate cancer through research, and therefore may introduce new and better ways of managing or monitoring your cancer.

## What are the benefits of active surveillance?

- You will avoid the physical side effects associated with treatment.
- It does not interfere with your everyday life as much as if you are having treatment.

## What are the risks or disadvantages?

- Some men may become anxious or worry about their cancer changing.
- You will need to have more prostate biopsies.
- There is a small chance that the cancer may grow more quickly than expected and become more difficult to treat.
- There is a risk that your general health may change which may make some treatments unsuitable for you.

## Are there any side effects?

As active surveillance involves no treatment there are no physical side effects. However, some men do find it difficult living with prostate cancer and worry that it may change or spread. Men have also reported anxiety or depression. It is unclear whether men whose prostate cancer is being monitored worry more about cancer than men who are having treatment.

Some studies have suggested that a few men on active surveillance choose to have treatment even though there is no change in their cancer because they are worried about it.

## What happens if I change my mind?

If you change your mind and decide you want treatment, you just need to contact us to let us know. We will then arrange an appointment to discuss what treatment is most appropriate for you.

## Is there any other support?

You may find that it helps to talk to family or friends about how you are feeling. Partners and family also often worry about their loved ones being on active surveillance. Many people think if you have cancer it should be treated and do not understand that some men never need treatment. It is a good idea to bring them along to your appointment so they can discuss any concerns they have and see how you are doing.

Some people find that it helps to talk to other men who have been on active surveillance. There is a prostate cancer support group in Dudley (see details in the next section 'Can I find out more?'), or talk to your urology cancer specialist nurse.

## Can I find out more?

You can find out more information from the following organisations:

### **Dudley Cancer Support**

10 Ednam Road  
Dudley, DY1 1JX  
Tel: 01384 231232. Fax: 01384 459975  
Email: [info@support4cancer.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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 cancer 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 cancer nurse specialists on 01384 456111 ext. 2873 or  
mobile 07787 512834 (8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

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](mailto: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.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

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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