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Hormone Therapy for Prostate Cancer

Your physician has recommended that you start hormone therapy for your prostate cancer. Hormone therapy decreases the testosterone (male hormone) levels that your body produces. This is similar to a “chemical castration”. By lowering your testosterone levels hopefully the cancer will slow down in growth. This alone does not cure you of your cancer. The hormone shots can be used alone or in combination with radiation therapy. Often times your physician will provide the hormone shots for a period of time during and after radiation therapy to help improve your outcome for cure. Unfortunately as with any medication, there are side-effects. The side-effects of hormone therapy include hot flashes (the most common), breast enlargement, some weight gain, fatigue and in the long run you are at increased risk for osteoporosis. It would be our recommendation that you have a bone density study completed at the initiation of hormone therapy and then periodically throughout your treatment. 2-3 years between bone density studies is not unusual. In the meantime it would be in your best interest to take a calcium supplement daily. 1200 mg of Calcium with 400 IU of Vitamin D is helpful. Weight bearing exercise such as walking and weight lifting is encouraged to help keep your bones strong and reduce the risk of fracture. If you are identified at increased risk for osteoporosis by the bone density study or other risk factors such as smoking and family history, then you may be referred to your primary care provider for additional treatment as necessary. If you have not had a bone density study, please do not hesitate to speak to your provider about this issue.