

Hormone drug: Flutamide

This fact sheet is for men who are about to start, or are already taking, flutamide to control their prostate cancer. It explains how the drug is taken, why it is used and what side effects it may cause. Read our **Hormone therapy** fact sheet for more information about how hormone therapy is used to treat prostate cancer. We hope these fact sheets will help you to make decisions about your treatment. They should be used together with the information that comes with your medicine and the advice of your specialist team or pharmacist.

What is flutamide?

Flutamide is a form of hormone therapy called an anti-androgen. It comes as a 250mg tablet.

Flutamide and other anti-androgens work by stopping testosterone from reaching the cancer cells. Without testosterone the prostate cancer cells are not able to grow. Flutamide will not cure prostate cancer but it can keep the cancer under control for many months or years.

How do I take flutamide?

You should take your flutamide tablet three times each day. Try and space the doses out evenly, for example take one every eight hours. There are two main reasons for taking flutamide.

Treatment of prostate cancer

You may take flutamide on its own to slow down the growth of cancer that has spread outside the prostate gland (advanced). You may also take flutamide if other types of hormone drug such as LHRH agonists or surgery to remove the testicles (orchidectomy) are no longer controlling the cancer. Flutamide can also be used together with an LHRH agonist or orchidectomy to treat all stages of prostate cancer. This is called maximal androgen blockade.

Flare

If you are about to start treatment with an LHRH agonist, you may take flutamide to prevent the body's normal response to the first injection, which is to produce testosterone. This temporary rise in testosterone could cause the cancer to grow more quickly for a short time. This is known as flare. An anti-androgen tablet like flutamide can help to prevent this flare from happening. You will start taking the tablets a week or so before the first injection of LHRH agonists and continue taking them for a week or two afterwards. It is important that you take all of the tablets you have been given.

What are the side effects?

Like all drugs, flutamide can cause side effects in some men. The risk of side effects may vary depending on the dose you are taking. We have listed the most common ones here but you should tell your specialist team if you notice any other changes while you are having treatment.

Some men get very few side effects and others get more. Many side effects will only last for as long as you are taking the drug.

More information

To find out more about flutamide therapy you can read:

- The Tool Kit fact sheet **Hormone Therapy**. This gives an overview of different types of hormone therapy.
- The booklet **Living with hormone therapy: A guide for men with prostate cancer**. This includes more detailed information on side effects and ways to manage them.

To order these publications call our Helpline on 0800 074 8383 or email us at literature@prostate-cancer.org.uk. You can also download all of our publications from our website www.prostate-cancer.org.uk

Reporting unusual side effects: The Yellow Card Scheme

If you think you are experiencing a side effect from your medication that is not mentioned in the information leaflet that comes with it, then you can report it using the Yellow Card Scheme. This is run by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). They will investigate and if they find a problem with a medication then the MHRA will take action to protect the public. There are three ways you can report a side effect:

- Use the online Yellow Card form at www.yellowcard.gov.uk
- Ask your pharmacist for a Yellow Card form
- Call the Yellow Card freephone on 0808 100 3352

Notes

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to make sure that its services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope that these will add to the medical advice you have had and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please contact your doctor if you are worried about any medical issues.

The Prostate Cancer Charity funds research into the causes of, and treatments for, prostate cancer. We also provide support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. We rely on charitable donations to continue this work. If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 8222 7666.

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References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available on our website.

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