

[Home](#) > [Research and Advocacy](#) > [Research Summaries](#) > [Three Years of Treatment With Imatinib Helps Patients With High-Risk GIST Live Longer](#)

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Three Years of Treatment With Imatinib Helps Patients With High-Risk GIST Live Longer [1]

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A study on the drug imatinib (Gleevec) for patients with high-risk gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST) showed that three years of treatment after surgery helped patients live longer and avoid recurrences (cancer that comes back after treatment). Imatinib is a type of targeted therapy, a treatment that targets the cancer's specific genes, proteins, or the tissue environment that contributes to cancer growth and survival. Specifically, it targets gene mutations (changes) that contribute to cancer growth for about 90% of people with GIST. The current standard treatment for GIST that can be surgically removed is one year of imatinib after surgery.

In this study, researchers compared one year of imatinib with three years of imatinib after surgery to find out if treatment for a longer period was more effective. After about five years, researchers found that about 66% of patients who received treatment for three years had not had a recurrence, compared with 48% of patients who received treatment for one year. Similarly, 92% of patients who received imatinib for three years were alive after five years, compared with 82% of patients who received imatinib for only one year.

What this means for patients

“Earlier studies have shown fewer recurrences with one year of imatinib treatment after surgery, but in this study we also saw improved survival after three years of therapy,” said lead author Heikki Joensuu, MD, Professor of Oncology at Helsinki University Central Hospital in Helsinki, Finland. “It’s likely to become the standard treatment.”

Questions to ask your doctor

- What are my treatment options for GIST?
- How long will I receive treatment?
- What is the chance that the GIST will recur?

For More Information

[Guide to GIST](#) [2]

[Understanding Targeted Treatments](#) [3]

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/three-years-treatment-imatinib-helps-patients-high-risk-gist-live-longer>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Gastrointestinal+Stromal+Tumor+-+GIST>

[3]
<http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Un>