

High-Dose, Short-Term Radiation Therapy for Prostate Cancer is as Effective as Standard Radiation Therapy

The study: Researchers compared using a shorter (five week) course of higher-dose radiation therapy to the standard (seven and a half week) course of radiation therapy to treat prostate cancer. In this study, 152 men with prostate cancer received 38 treatments for seven and a half weeks of standard radiation therapy, called intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), and 151 men received 26 treatments for about five weeks of a higher daily dose of radiation therapy (called hypofractionated IMRT). Researchers compared the percentage of men whose prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels continued to increase after treatment, a sign that the cancer had come back or was not completely gone.

The results: After about 39 months, the percentage of men who still had increasing PSA levels was similar for both types of radiation therapy. Of the men who received standard radiation therapy, 21% had increasing PSA levels after treatment, and 17% of men who received higher-dose, short-term radiation therapy had increasing PSA levels. Research to find the appropriate dose for high-dose, short term radiation therapy without increasing side effects is ongoing. Prostate cancer often grows slowly, meaning that the dose of radiation therapy is different than that used for faster-growing cancers. However, researchers found that the appropriate dose to treat prostate cancer may be between the dose needed for other slow-growing cancers and cancers that grow more quickly. This is important because a man with prostate cancer will have a better chance of recovery with the fewest possible side effects when receiving the appropriate dose to treat the cancer.

What this means for patients

Men receiving standard radiation therapy often have treatment five days a week for up to eight weeks, which may cause fatigue and decrease their quality of life. The hypofractionated IMRT reduces the number of visits that men need to make for treatment and slightly lowers the overall dose of radiation.

?The similarity between these two treatments suggests that short-term, high-dose radiation therapy could be used in place of standard radiation therapy, improving a patient's quality of life and decreasing the time spent in treatment,? said lead author Alan Pollack, MD, PhD, Professor and Chairman of the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. The side effects of high-dose, short-term radiation therapy included rectal bleeding and increased need to urinate, although these side effects were not severe. Radiation therapy is one option for prostate cancer; talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of all your treatment options.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What stage and grade is my prostate cancer, and what does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What treatment do you recommend and why?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- What are the possible side effects of this treatment option, both in the short term and the long term?
- If I experience side effects from treatment, how can they be managed?

For More Information

[Cancer.Net Guide to Prostate Cancer](#) [1]

[Making Decisions About Cancer Treatment](#) [2]

[Frequently Asked Questions About Radiation Therapy](#) [3]

[Side Effects of Radiation Therapy](#) [4]

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19562>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24582>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24539>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24677>