

Drug Helps Slow Growth of Early-Stage Prostate Cancer [1]

A new study on the drug dutasteride (Avodart) showed that it can slow the growth of early-stage prostate cancer for men whose prostate cancer is being monitored with a method called active surveillance. Active surveillance or watchful waiting is a common way to monitor prostate cancer that is growing slowly when actively treating the cancer would cause more discomfort than the disease itself. The cancer is monitored closely and active treatment begins only if the tumor shows signs of becoming more aggressive or spreading, causes pain, or blocks the urinary tract.

In the study, 302 men with early-stage prostate cancer received either dutasteride or a placebo for three years. A placebo [2] is an inactive drug or treatment used in a clinical trial. Researchers found that cancer grew in 38% of men taking dutasteride compared with 49% of men taking the placebo. They also found that 36% of men receiving dutasteride had no evidence of cancer on a biopsy taken three years after the study began compared with 23% of men taking the placebo. These results mean that dutasteride may help slow prostate cancer growth and may help shrink a tumor over time.

What this means for patients

“Even though men realize that if they reach a certain age, many will have some sort of prostate cancer that likely will never give them problems, there is still anxiety associated with monitoring and not treating it,” said lead author Neil Fleshner, MD, Head of Urology at the University Health Network and the Love Chair in Prostate Cancer Prevention at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. “In some cases, we treat prostate cancer that may never become life threatening. I’m hoping that these results, showing that men may be able to take a drug that slows the cancer’s growth, may allow more men to pursue active surveillance for even longer periods.”

Questions to ask your doctor

- What stage of prostate cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- Do you recommend active surveillance?
- What type of follow-up schedule would I need?

For More Information

Guide to Prostate Cancer [3]

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/drug-helps-slow-growth-early-stage-prostate-cancer>

[2] <http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/24390>

[3] <http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/19562>