

## HORMONE THERAPY

Guide for men affected  
by prostate cancer and  
their relatives





Toll-free support line 7 days a week  
**1 855 899-2873**

Our **healthcare professionals** are here to answer all your questions and those of your loved ones **procure.ca**



TALKING **PROCURE** COMFORT

## What you'll find in this guide

For many men with prostate cancer like you, using short-term or long-term hormone therapy, whether or not combined with another treatment, offers the hope of controlling your disease and a longer life.

The purpose of this guide is to inform you about this treatment and to give you some useful tips for managing your symptoms and taking care of yourself.

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## What is hormone therapy?

Hormone therapy is used to prevent the body from secreting or using testosterone, among other things, which therefore helps to slow the growth and spread of cancer.

Hormone therapy alone cannot cure prostate cancer, but it can reduce the size of tumors, put the cancer cells "to sleep" and control the cancer's growth, thus prolonging your life.

## Why receive hormone therapy?

Hormone therapy can be used to reduce the size of a tumor prior to treatment or to increase the effectiveness of other treatments, such as radiation therapy.

It can help control remaining cancer cells after treatment, and even target prostate cancer that is advanced or that has come back after surgery or radiation therapy. For cancer with metastases, hormone therapy can also help curb tumor growth.

## ► INTRODUCTION TO HORMONE THERAPY

Some cancers are said to be hormone sensitive. In other words, they depend on hormones to grow or survive. In the case of prostate cancer, it is affected by male sex hormones, or androgens, particularly testosterone.

### How do I know if this treatment is effective?

A low and stable PSA level, performed every 3 to 6 months, is a good sign that the hormone therapy is effective, and that the cancer is under control, a state that can be maintained for several years.

However, over time, hormone therapy may lose its effectiveness, and the cancer can start to grow again, despite a very low level of testosterone. If this is the case, your doctor may introduce a next-generation hormone therapy, in the form of a tablet.

### How is the treatment administered?

Depending on the medication your doctor chooses, hormone therapy can be given in 2 ways:

- Injections or implants to stop testosterone production;
- Oral medication to block the effects of the hormone.

### Duration and frequency of treatment

Injections can be given monthly or every 3, 4 or 6 months depending on the medication prescribed. Oral medication will be according to your prescription.

The duration of treatment varies from one man to another. Hormone therapy is sometimes given continuously or intermittently, depending on your situation. Talk to your doctor.



Depending on the medication chosen by your doctor, hormone therapy may be given by injection or with an orally tablet.



## Help your medical team help you

The medical team that takes care of you during your treatments does not necessarily know your entire health history. It is important to [discuss with your healthcare professionals](#) different hormone therapies, duration of treatment, side effects and long-term risks such as cardiovascular disease.

### With your specialist

- Inform him of any cardiovascular or metabolic problem (e.g. diabetes);
- Ask if the recommended treatment may increase or aggravate these illnesses;
- Ask if the treatment can be intermittent when your PSA is stable.

### With your doctor\*

- Tell your doctor that you are starting or taking hormone therapy;
- Make sure you have a check-up at the beginning of your treatment and regularly afterwards;
- Ask how to control long-term risk factors to keep you and your heart healthy.



## ► HOW TO MANAGE SIDE EFFECTS

[You should know that hormone therapy](#) can cause side effects that vary in intensity and duration from one man to another. They usually subside as the body gets used to the medication. Remember that you will not experience all side effects.

### The main side effects


- Fatigue;
- Hot flashes;
- Decreased libido;
- Erectile dysfunction;
- Weight gain and loss of muscle mass;
- Mood swings.

Hormone therapy can also weaken bones and, in the longer term, increase the risk of diabetes or heart problems.

These side effects can disappear over time, and some are treatable.



\* Family doctor or any other health professional (cardiologist, nurse, pharmacist, etc.). If you don't have a family doctor, register without delay at the [Québec Family Doctor Finder](#).



## Your lifestyle habits give you an advantage over some side effects.

Adopt a healthy diet including a calcium and vitamin D supplement, stay physically active, and get a full health check-up regularly.

Do not hesitate to discuss all your side effects with your doctor during your follow-up visits. Asking for a referral to a sex therapist, a nutritionist/dietician, a physiotherapist or a kinesiologist is also a good starting point for addressing and resolving these inconveniences.

## Your role in taking care of yourself is just as important as any medicine or treatment.

By changing certain lifestyle habits, you will feel more in control and promote your physical and psychological well-being.

## ► NUTRITION

We know that a healthy diet coupled with a healthy weight is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and diabetes.

### The importance of a healthy diet

Weight gain and loss of muscle mass are common side effects of hormone therapy due to the drop in your testosterone which causes your metabolism to slow down.

A healthy, balanced and varied diet promotes the maintenance of a healthy weight... if you move at the same time of course!

**The priority is to slow or stop weight gain and avoid a waistline that will prevent you from seeing your toes.**





**Adopt a Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fiber and low-fat proteins.**

**Opt for:**

- A variety of fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits;
- Low-fat proteins like fish, poultry, and lean meats;
- Fiber-rich foods, such as whole-grain cereal products, nuts and legumes.

**Limit:**

- Foods rich in animal fat;
- Processed foods and deli meats;
- Junk food as well as sugar, salt and fried food.

**Additional tips:**

- Reduce your portions;
- Use broiling, baking, or steaming cooking methods;
- Monitor your intake of vitamin D (800 to 2000 IU/day) and calcium (800 to 1200 mg/day);
- Drink 1.5 to 2 liters of liquid every day (water, herbal tea, soup, etc.);
- Limit your alcohol intake.

► **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**Stay active during treatment**

It is normal not to feel like exercising, but it is recommended that you be as active as possible throughout your treatment. In general, the aim is to maintain endurance, strength and flexibility so that you can continue your daily activities.

Regular physical activity helps reduce the risks of:

- Cardiovascular diseases, heart attacks and strokes;
- Mortality from all causes;
- Type 2 diabetes;
- Weight gain and obesity.

**The benefits of moving every day are numerous**

**An improvement in your:**

- Strength and muscle mass;
- Self esteem;
- Quality of sleep;
- Cognitive function (e.g. concentration).


**A reduction in your:**

- Risk of osteoporosis;
- Body fat levels;
- Level of stress, anxiety and depression;
- Fatigue.

To counter most of the side effects related to prostate cancer treatments and/or hormone therapy, [opt for physical exercise!](#) If you don't know where to start, walk!







## The important thing is to move while respecting your limits!

- Choose exercises you like;
- Start with a mild to moderate intensity (e.g., yoga, walking);
- Aim for 30 minutes of exercise, 4-5 times/week. You can divide the duration into 10-minute intervals.
- If you are used to getting little exercise, increase the duration gradually.

Physiotherapists and kinesiologists are professionals who can help you work on your muscle mass and guide you in your fitness process.

Did you know that cleaning, mowing the lawn and washing your car are also forms of exercise? Moving has never been easier!

## ► SEXUALITY

### What to expect in bed

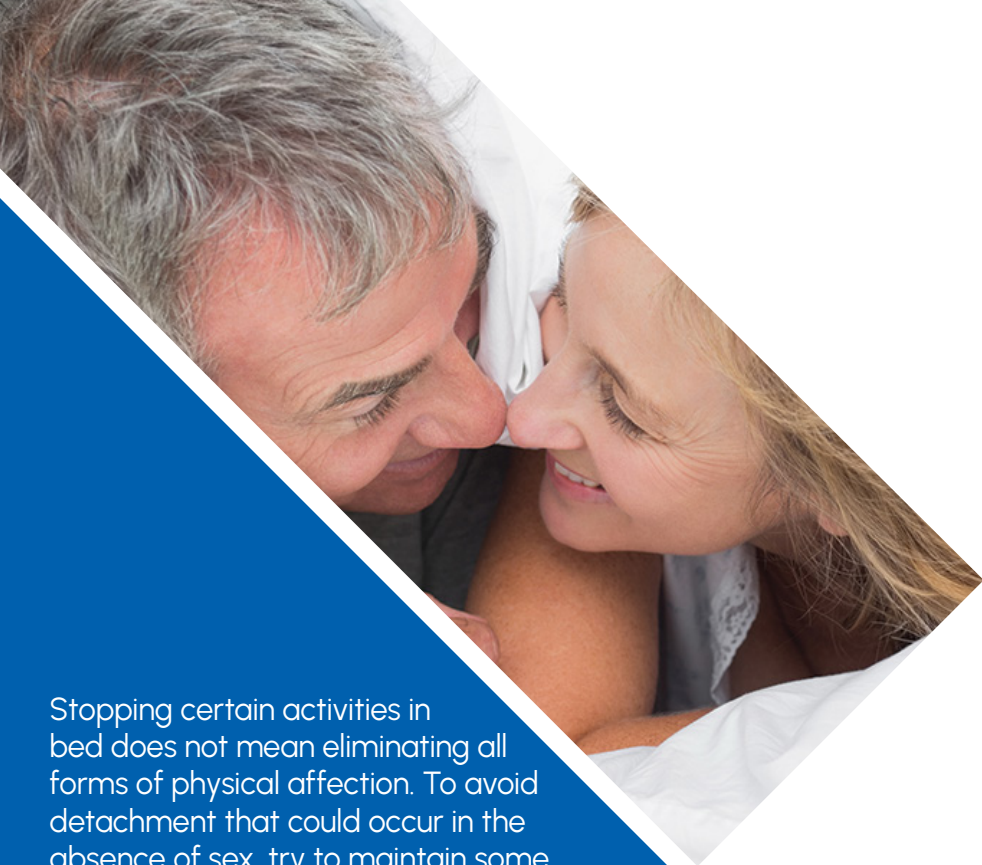
Decreased interest in sex is a common side effect of hormone therapy, due to testosterone deficiency which itself induces sexual disorders, including erectile dysfunction.

### I have no libido

[Have you lost your libido?](#) Do you experience anxiety in bed? Are you afraid of disappointing your partner? Does your sexual performance no longer meet your expectations? All of these undesirable scenarios are possible and completely normal during and after your treatments.

Since intimacy and sexual habits vary from couple to couple, losing your libido can affect you in different ways. Some couples, even before the treatments, had little or no sex and therefore may notice little change. Others accept the absence of sexual intercourse or redefine their sex life by focusing on intimate activities they are still able to do and find new pleasure in them. Either way, the important thing is to communicate with your partner and express your emotions and needs.





Stopping certain activities in bed does not mean eliminating all forms of physical affection. To avoid detachment that could occur in the absence of sex, try to maintain some form of physical contact to demonstrate your affection.

Do not underestimate the effect of a kiss, a caress, a touch.

### **Talk to each other!**

Whether you've made the decision to reduce the frequency of your sexual activities or to stop them, the important thing is to [talk with your partner](#) about what you're going through. If you are not very adept at the subject, it may be useful to consult, alone or with your partner, a sexologist when the grieving of your previous sex life becomes unbearable.

## **The importance of communicating**

### **To your partner**

#### **Performance is not the only option!**

- Take time together to share your emotions, your worries, your expectations;
- Cultivate tenderness (caresses, kisses, hugs) with your partner;
- Preserve your relational and sexual intimacy by planning intimate moments;
- Be receptive and open to other possibilities: mutual masturbation, oral sex, caresses;
- Watch naughty movies, use your erotic imagination;
- Find alternative solutions and compromises;
- Live in the present moment and make room for humor.

### **To your doctor**

#### **He or she could offer some solutions:**

- Oral medication to help achieve an erection;
- Medication injected into your penis;
- Medicine in the form of a suppository in your urethra;
- Penis pump with a ring that maintains the erection.

### **To a sex therapist**

#### **Support delivers results on various levels, including:**

- Regaining a virile body image;
- Giving your partner pleasure despite erectile dysfunction;
- Redefining sexuality despite a decreased libido;
- Developing ways to fight against anxiety, depression or sadness.



## ► FATIGUE

### I am always tired

[Fatigue](#) (acute or chronic) is the most common symptom reported by people with cancer. Noted among others:

- Excessive sleepiness, or feeling exhausted when waking up after a good night's sleep;
- Rapid fatigue during activities, or low energy at all times;
- Difficulty concentrating and memory loss.

### Here are some tips for maintaining a certain level of energy throughout the day:

#### Get enough sleep

Maintain a regular routine to get the best night's sleep possible. Avoid sleeping too much during the day, as this can make you feel more tired.

#### Save your energy

Write down the times when your energy is high and plan your activities and appointments at those times of the day.

#### Ask for help

Your family and friends are there to support you, so do not hesitate to take them up on their offers of support.

#### Get some exercise

Regular exercise as simple as walking can help improve your energy levels and reduce fatigue.

#### Eat well

Opt for a well-balanced diet, drink plenty of fluids and consult a nutritionist as needed.

#### Manage your mood

Depression and anxiety can accentuate your feelings of fatigue. See the "Emotional well-being" section.

Your level of fatigue is still not improving? Speak to your doctor so that he can offer you other possible solutions.

## ► HOT FLASHES

### What are they?

They usually start as a sudden feeling of warmth in the face and chest that then spreads to the rest of the body in waves and can last anywhere from 2 to 30 minutes. You may also experience sweating, red-dening of the skin, a racing heart, or feelings of anxiousness. [Hot flashes](#) usually get better as your body gets used to the treatment or if medication is stopped, but there are a number of things you can do on a daily basis to help manage them.

About 50% to 80% of men on hormone therapy for prostate cancer will experience some sort of hot flashes.





### How to deal with hot flashes:

- Drink fluids to stay hydrated, preferably cold, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverages;
- Avoid spicy foods;
- Wear clothes that let the skin breathe (e.g. 100% cotton clothes);
- Wear several layers of clothing so you can take them off when you get too hot;
- Keep good air circulation in the house by opening windows and using fans;
- Take a shower or bath with lukewarm rather than hot water;
- Put terrycloth towels on your mattress and pillows if you tend to sweat excessively in bed;

Talk to your doctor about your hot flashes if they are unbearable, as there are treatments that can help.

### ► EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Although it is normal during your treatment to experience negative emotions, if you find that some persist on a daily basis and for more than two weeks, [you should talk to your doctor](#) and get outside help. Pay attention to the following signs:

Signs related to anxiety	Signs related to depression
Excessive worry or agitation	Feeling of sadness, emptiness, despair
Sleep disturbances, fatigue, exhaustion or excessive sleepiness	Loss of self-esteem and isolation
Muscle tension	Confusion or personality change
Rapid heartbeat, tremors, shortness of breath	Memory and concentration problem
Trouble concentrating, irritability or restlessness	Suicidal thoughts

You may feel more emotional, more expressive, more angry, or more irritable. You may also be more distracted and forgetful.





## Practical advice for your emotional well-being

- Keep a logbook to help you identify upsetting and triggering events;
- Start a conversation with someone you trust to help you put the situation into perspective;
- Discover activities and hobbies that do you good (e.g. music, reading, pets, activities in nature, etc.);
- Develop strategies to deal with stress (e.g.: breathe slowly, recognize your limits, take a moment to pause).

## One day at a time

You will have good and bad days throughout your treatment. Moments of fatigue, depression, frustration, as well as days of hope, good humor and optimism. In between, there will be mixed and inexplicable emotions.

Learn to live through each moment and each emotion and explore breathing techniques that will help you cope with the stress and uncertainty you are experiencing. When possible, surround yourself with positive relationships with your family, friends, colleagues and remain open to receiving help.

Above all, remember that you are not alone. PROCURE offers free support and remains a valuable resource to answer your questions 365 days a year.

**If you have several signs related to depression, do not wait. Consult your medical team (nurse and/or doctor), who will be able to guide you appropriately according to your situation and your needs.**

## Advice for caregivers

### Take care of yourself as well.

As a [caregiver](#), you play a very important support role. However, you also have your own limits and it is important to respect them in order to stay strong.

Caregiver burnout is a serious problem that is hard to notice when you focus all your attention on the patient – but you also need to take care of yourself.

- Watch for symptoms of depression;
- Find time to rest, focus on yourself, and do something you enjoy;
- Make sure you get enough hours of sleep or take naps as needed;
- Find pleasure in being active. Endorphins, which are naturally produced by your body during physical activity, are mood boosters and are key to keeping your spirits up.

**Talk to someone you trust about your feelings or contact PROCURE, which offers free support services 7 days a week at 1 855 899-2873 with nurses specialized in uro-oncology.**





## ► USEFUL RESOURCES FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

### **PROCURE**

Information and support for prostate cancer patients and their loved ones.  
7 days a week toll-free support line **1 855 899-2873**  
[procure.ca](http://procure.ca)

### **Canadian Cancer Society**

Information and support for all types of cancers.  
[cancer.ca](http://cancer.ca)

### **Dietitians of Canada**

Nutritional information and expert advice.  
[unlockfood.ca](http://unlockfood.ca)

### **Service Canada**

Information on sickness benefits employment insurance and/or compassionate care.  
[canada.ca](http://canada.ca)

### **Ordre professionnel des sexologues du Québec (OPSQ)**

To obtain a consultation with a sex therapist.  
[opsq.org](http://opsq.org)

### **Ordre professionnel de la physiothérapie du Québec (OPPQ)**

To obtain a consultation with a physiotherapist.  
[oppq.qc.ca](http://oppq.qc.ca)

### **The Quebec Kinesiologist Federation**

To obtain a consultation with a kinesiologist.  
[kinesiologue.com](http://kinesiologue.com)

### **Ordre des diététistes-nutritionnistes du Québec (ODNQ)**

To obtain a consultation with a nutritionist.  
[opdq.org](http://opdq.org)

### **PROCURE simply put**

PROCURE is a charitable organization in the fight against prostate cancer recognized by the Quebec and Canadian Urological Associations.

It informs men with prostate cancer and their families and offers them a free support service 7 days a week with nurses specialized in uro-oncology. PROCURE also finances world class research projects so new treatments can be available.

Visit [procure.ca](http://procure.ca) to learn more.

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## Medical disclaimer

The information presented in this publication is general and does not substitute a relationship with your medical team. Before making any decision of a medical nature and if you have any questions about your state of health, consult your doctor.

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ASKING



UNDERSTANDING