



Surveillance

“Watchful Waiting” and “Active Surveillance” for Prostate Cancer

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™

*The Official Foundation of the
American Urological Association*

WHAT IS SURVEILLANCE FOR PROSTATE CANCER?

Surveillance does not actively treat prostate cancer. It is a way to monitor the cancer growth.

With prostate cancer, you may not need treatment right away. Some cancers grow slowly and treatment will never be needed. Other cancers grow fast and could be life-threatening. Based on the stage and grade of the cancer, your risk grouping, age and health, your preferences and treatment goals, your doctor may suggest surveillance.

“Watchful waiting” and “active surveillance” are two ways for doctors to observe cancer growth before moving on to treatment, if needed.

- **Watchful waiting** is a less involved system of monitoring the cancer without treatment. It involves digital rectal examinations (DRE) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests. It does not involve many biopsies or imaging tests. It is best for men with prostate cancer who do not want or cannot have more active treatment.
- **Active surveillance** is a way to monitor the cancer growth with a series of tests. These are routine PSA tests, DREs and periodic biopsies. A schedule for tests will be set up with your doctor. To help with biopsies, imaging exams are also done.

The goal of surveillance is to allow men to keep their quality of life when the cancer is growing slowly. If things change, men may choose to have radiation, surgery, prescription drugs or hormone therapy to more aggressively treat the cancer.

WHO IS A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR SURVEILLANCE?

Surveillance can be a good choice for men with no symptoms, or when the cancer is not expected to grow quickly. It can also be a good choice for men who are older or have other serious health issues. Men who do not want active treatment and the side effects may also opt for surveillance.

SHOULD I CONSIDER SURVEILLANCE?

Choosing the right treatment and when to start is a personal choice that men should make with their doctor. No one treatment is perfect for every man.

Surveillance is mainly used to delay or avoid a more active form of therapy. If the cancer starts to grow during surveillance, then you can take the next steps. Many men never need more aggressive treatments.

Action is taken only if the disease changes or grows, and you choose to do more. Your doctor may then suggest surgery or radiation.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF SURVEILLANCE?

The main benefit of surveillance is there are very few treatment-related risks or side effects. It also costs less than the more active treatments.

The main risk of watchful waiting or active surveillance is the cancer could grow and spread between follow-up visits. This can make the cancer harder to treat over time.

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In addition, with active surveillance, you will have to undergo multiple biopsies over time to track cancer growth. A biopsy is still a surgery and it can lead to bleeding or infection.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Many men who have prostate cancer feel worried, stressed and angry. It is of great value to think about how you're coping with this diagnosis over time, and how you may handle the treatment(s). During surveillance, counseling can be a very helpful coping tool for you and the people who care for you.

Talk to your doctor about which treatment is right for you.

ABOUT THE UROLOGY CARE FOUNDATION

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions or go to UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist to find a doctor near you.

DISCLAIMER

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologists or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For copies of printed materials about Prostate Cancer and other urologic conditions, visit UrologyHealth.org/Order or call 800-828-7866.