



Prostate Active Surveillance Program

Welcome Resources

Welcome to the Program

Welcome to the Prostate Active Surveillance Program at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). This information explains everything you need to know as a new member of the program.

Your care team

Your care team looks forward to working with you on your prostate health over the next few months and years.

Your active surveillance care team is led by advanced practice providers (APPs), such as a nurse practitioner (NP) or physician assistant (PA), along with Dr. Behfar Ehdaie. Our APPs are experts trained by Dr. Ehdaie who have written articles and given lectures about active surveillance.

Your Prostate Active Surveillance care provider is:

Why is active surveillance right for me?

You are here because you have been diagnosed with a low risk prostate cancer. This means your cancer may grow slowly, if at all, and is less likely to metastasize (spread) to other parts of your body.

Together, you and your doctor decided to treat the cancer with active surveillance instead of with surgery or other treatments. Active surveillance is a form of treatment for prostate cancer. It helps you avoid the possible side effects of other treatments.

Your care team may notice changes in your prostate or tumor at any time during active surveillance. If so, they may recommend stopping active surveillance. You may also choose to stop active surveillance at any time. You can start another type of treatment, such as surgery or radiation therapy.



Memorial Sloan Kettering
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Active Surveillance Schedule

During active surveillance, you will have tests every few months to look for any changes in your prostate.

The 4 parts to active surveillance monitoring are: prostate biopsy, prostate magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood testing, and digital rectal exam (DRE). You may also have genetic testing. Your care team will use the results from these tests to monitor the cancer.

Here is an example of what your testing schedule may look like:

TODAY	EVERY 6 MONTHS	EVERY 18 MONTHS	EVERY 3 YEARS
Welcome Visit	PSA Blood Test and Visit	Prostate MRI	Prostate Biopsy
Your first visit in the program. Meet your advanced practice provider (APP) and learn about the program.	Get a PSA blood test. Visit with your APP care provider to talk about your results and health.	Get a prostate MRI.	Get a prostate biopsy.

**If your PSA is higher than your earlier PSA results, you may need to repeat the test in 6 to 8 weeks.*

***Your PSA results may change over time, or your MRI result may look unusual. If so, we may talk with you about having your next tests earlier. We may move up the dates for your MRI, your surveillance biopsy, or both.*

About the Treatments



PSA Blood Test

You will have regular PSA blood testing. PSA is a normal protein made by your prostate gland. PSA blood tests are done to check your levels to see if the cancer is growing or changing.

Your PSA levels will go up and down during active surveillance. This is normal. Your healthcare provider will monitor your levels and look for major changes over time.



Prostate Biopsy

During a prostate biopsy, we take small samples of tissue from your prostate gland.

The samples are examined under a microscope, checked for signs of cancer, and given a Gleason score. A Gleason score tells us if it's likely cancer will spread.



Prostate MRI

An MRI uses strong magnetic fields to make pictures of the inside of your body. It's used to see the type, size, and location of tumors.

A prostate MRI looks at your entire prostate. It can help your healthcare provider see areas of the gland that may not look normal.

Your MRI can also show some changes to your prostate over time. This is normal. Your healthcare provider will look for any major changes during your routine surveillance MRI. Depending on your results, they may ask you to have a prostate biopsy.



Digital Rectal Exam

You may have a digital rectal exam (DRE) every now and then. Your healthcare provider will look at the end of your prostate for nodules (abnormal growths of tissue that can be cancer).

They will compare these results to your other DREs. This is a useful tool for deciding the next steps in active surveillance.

Your Care Team

Experts in active surveillance will work together to monitor your prostate. If you have another MSK urologist, we will tell them about any changes to your prostate. We will talk with them about your next steps.

Care Providers



Xin (Kenny)
Lin, APP



Nicholas
Romano, APP

Your main healthcare provider is an APP with special education and training in prostate cancer.

If you have any questions, contact your APP healthcare provider through MyMSK, our patient portal. If you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

Supportive Services

During Prostate Active Surveillance, you may be referred to one or more of these providers. They can help you manage your symptoms. They can also help you manage the emotional and financial impact of cancer treatment.

- Sexual and Reproductive Medicine Program
- Functional Urology Service
- Counseling Center
- Patient Financial Services

Care at Your Convenience

MSK's Sidney Kimmel Center for Prostate and Urologic Cancers is at 353 E. 68th St., New York, NY 10065. But our program offers care at your convenience, wherever you are.

Telemedicine Visits

Every 6 months, you will have a visit with your APP. These will alternate between telemedicine and in person. Telemedicine visits connect you to your healthcare provider through your computer or smart device (smartphone or tablet).

Telemedicine has several benefits:

- You and your provider can monitor your health wherever you are.
- Your caregiver can easily join your exam, if you wish.
- Your provider can show you data about your cancer testing on the screen.
- You spend less time commuting and more time with your provider.

MSK can help you with technical support and instructions for your telemedicine visit. If you do not want to have telemedicine visits, please let your provider know.

Local PSA Testing



MSK has locations in New York and New Jersey. You can have your PSA blood tests every 6 months at a location that's easiest for you.

For a list of MSK locations, please visit www.msk.org/locations

To schedule your next PSA test at an MSK regional site, talk with your care coordinator or office coordinator. They can schedule your lab work at an MSK location closer to you.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Here are some of the most common questions about active surveillance. Please ask your MSK care team about any questions you have.

If the cancer grows or spreads, will active surveillance catch it early enough for treatment?

Yes. We understand you may be worried about living with cancer, afraid it's growing without you knowing. It's important to remember this is unlikely to happen.

Research shows that active surveillance is a safe treatment for people with low-risk cancers. Whether you choose active surveillance or more aggressive treatment, your risk of dying from prostate cancer is just as low. Your care team monitors the cancer closely. They look for important changes to your prostate. If the cancer grows or spreads, your care team will know in time to take action.

Are active surveillance screenings like MRIs and biopsies accurate at catching cancer growth?

Yes. We cannot predict who will have cancer that gets worse or needs treatment in the future. But we know it's unlikely we will miss a change in the cancer if you follow your active surveillance schedule. The usual schedule is a PSA test every 6 months, MRIs every 18 months, and surveillance biopsies every 3 years. We may change this protocol if we see anything different in your PSA or MRI results. This is how we find cancer that's growing.

People in my life are asking me why I did not get the cancer removed. What should I say?

Your family, friends, or even other doctors may not understand why you're not getting treatment. You can tell them you have a kind of cancer that grows slowly. It does not need usual kinds of cancer treatment, such as surgery. It's also important to explain that active surveillance is a form of treatment. Research shows it's very good for managing the kind of prostate cancer you have.

Does it mean the cancer is growing or spreading if I have symptoms, such as trouble urinating (peeing)?

No. It's normal to have some lower urinary symptoms as you age. They are not a sign of

cancer. More often, they are signs of benign prostatic hyperplasia (beh- NINE prah- STA- tik HY- per- PLAY- zhuh), or BPH. It's caused by an enlarged (bigger) prostate and is not cancer.

Symptoms include leaking urine, urinating often, and being unable to empty your bladder all the way. Treatments can help with these symptoms. Please contact your MSK health care provider to discuss your symptoms. We can help or refer you to a special MSK clinic.

My PSA level looks high or keeps changing. Should I worry?

There's no normal PSA level, only a level that's normal for you. We find out that level by testing you every 6 months. It's also very normal for your PSA level to change. It can vary from test to test, or even day to day, by as much as 50%. A spike or change in your PSA most often is caused by inflammation (swelling), not cancer.

If there's a big change, we will repeat the test in 6 to 8 weeks. The repeated test often is closer to your normal range. If your PSA rises slowly after many tests, we will decide if you need an early MRI to learn more.

Sometimes I feel nervous about my decision to do active surveillance instead of other treatments. Should I change my mind?

Many people who choose active surveillance feel nervous at some point. Often, they have feelings before appointments, after a test, or when test results show something new. It's normal to worry with active surveillance. Research shows this feeling goes away soon. Within 2 years of starting active surveillance, most people do not feel more anxious than usual.

It may also help to know you're not alone. At MSK, more than 9 out of every 10 people with low- risk cancers (92%) choose active surveillance. Many people feel that living with cancer gets much easier over time. MSK is here to help if you would like counseling at any time. Your care team can give you a referral to see a social worker, psychiatrist, or counselor.