

Bitesize Guide to:

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer found in men. It can have a serious impact on one's quality of life, particularly if the cancer spreads to other areas of the body. It is important to understand its symptoms to diagnose prostate cancer as quickly as possible. This is our bitesize guide to the condition.

What is it?

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland found in men, lying between the penis and bladder. Prostate cancer occurs when cells in the prostate multiply abnormally and uncontrollably. Prostate cancer may go unnoticed while spreading throughout the body and causing harm.

Who gets it?

It is most common among men over 50 years old, especially those with a close-family history of prostate cancer.

Why does it happen?

It is unclear why cells become cancerous. However, several factors make prostate cancer more likely to occur. These include:

- Increasing age
- Being of African-Caribbean or African descent
- Family history of prostate cancer
- Being overweight

Diagnosing Prostate Cancer

If you notice any of the following symptoms, book an appointment with your GP immediately:

- Having problems with urination, such as difficulty starting urination, difficulty maintaining urination, and urine leakage
- Needing to urinate often
- Pain during urination
- Pain when ejaculating.
- Blood in your urine or semen.
- Finding it difficult to get an erection or maintain one.

There is no single test to check for prostate cancer, so a series of tests must be performed to reach a diagnosis. Your GP will ask you about your symptoms, and may take a sample of urine to test for infection. They also may perform a rectal exam to check the size and shape of your prostate, and perform a blood test to check PSA levels. PSA is a protein produced by the

prostate that can indicate abnormalities. If the doctor suspects cancer, they will refer you to a hospital specialist. The specialist may take a sample of tissue from your prostate to be examined for signs of cancer.

Treating Prostate Cancer

Treatment will depend on a number of factors: the extent and aggressiveness of the cancer, your age, and your general health.

If your cancer is small and low-risk, your doctor may advise a policy of 'watchful waiting' or 'active surveillance'. This simply means monitoring your symptoms and having regular check-ups to see if the cancer has spread.

If the cancer is in its early stages, or has just started to spread outside the prostate, you may be treated with one or more of the following:

- Surgery - removal of the whole prostate (radical prostatectomy) or parts of it
- Radiotherapy - radiation is used to kill the cancer cells
- Brachytherapy - another kind of radiotherapy, small radioactive seeds are inserted into the prostate to target the cancer
- Cryotherapy (or freezing therapy) - a substance is injected into the prostate to freeze and kill cancer cells
- Hormone therapy

4 Key Facts about Prostate Cancer

1. Some types of prostate cancer grow slowly and will have only a small effect on your quality of life.
2. You will have regular PSA tests once you have started treatment to check how well it is working. If your PSA levels drop, this normally means that the treatment is working.
3. Prostate cancer patients are looked after by a team of medical and surgical specialists who work together to provide a tailored treatment plan.
4. There are a number of support services to help you and your family deal with the emotional side of prostate cancer.

If you think you may have prostate cancer, speak to your healthcare professional.

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We want to make sure that our information is helpful to you and value feedback. To let us know your views or to find out the latest from The Urology Foundation visit www.theurologyfoundation.org

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