Prostate cancer facts

The prostate is a gland in males located between the bladder and the rectum. It surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. Its job is to produce fluid that makes up a part of semen. Normally, the prostate gland is the size of a walnut.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. Your chance of getting prostate cancer might be higher if:

- You are 50 years of age or older.
- You are black.
- Your father, brother or son has gotten it.

Should you get a prostate cancer screening? Talk to your doctor or learn more at cancer.org/cancer/prostatecancer/index.
Symptoms

When the prostate gets bigger because of cancer, it can squeeze the urethra. This stops or slows down the flow of urine. This may be a sign of prostate cancer. But other health conditions can cause the same problem, so check with your doctor if this happens to you. The same is true for these prostate cancer symptoms:

- Frequent urination (especially at night)
- Difficulty urinating
- Pain or burning during urination
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Nagging pain in the back, hips or pelvis
- Painful ejaculation

Screening for prostate cancer

Not all men have symptoms when they have prostate cancer. Routine screenings can be done to find it, but the decision to get a prostate cancer screening is yours. Not all health and medical organizations agree on whether screenings are right for everyone. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits. There are two common prostate cancer screening tests:

Prostate-specific antigen test

A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test measures the level of PSA in the blood. PSA is a protein made by the prostate gland. Its level may be higher in the blood of men who have prostate cancer. PSA levels may also be high in men who have an infection or inflammation of the prostate or an enlarged, but not cancerous, prostate. Talk to your doctor to see if this test is right for you.

Digital rectal exam

Digital rectal exam (DRE) is an exam of the rectum. The doctor or nurse inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into the lower part of the rectum to feel the prostate for lumps or anything else that seems unusual. This should be done every time you have your regular annual physical.
Treatment

Prostate cancer is a complex disease. Treatment options depend on many factors such as your age, health condition, and stage and grade of the cancer. You also may have strong feelings about the type of treatment you receive. Talk to your doctor and get a second opinion. Then you can weigh the benefits of the treatments against the side effects and possible outcome. Treatments for prostate cancer include:

Watchful waiting

Watchful waiting is checking on the cancer often, but not treating it until symptoms appear or change. This is often done for early-stage or slow-growing cancer and for older men with other medical problems.

Surgery

Surgery is an option for men who are in good health and whose cancer has not spread beyond the prostate. Men with advanced prostate cancer may have surgery to relieve their symptoms. There are several types of surgery for prostate cancer. Talk to your surgeon about which option is best for you.

Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy is a cancer treatment that uses high-energy X-rays, or other types of radiation, to kill cancer cells. This is an option for men with any stage of prostate cancer. Some men may choose radiation therapy instead of surgery. Others may have it after surgery. And still others may have it to relieve their symptoms.

Hormone therapy

Hormone therapy removes male hormones, or blocks their action, to stop cancer cells from growing. This therapy is usually used on men with advanced prostate cancer. It may also be used after a man has surgery for prostate cancer. And, men with early-stage prostate cancer may get hormone therapy before, during and after they get radiation therapy.
Sources:

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