

Prostate Cancer

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the growth of abnormal cells in the prostate gland. Growths of cancer cells are called tumors.

The prostate gland is part of a man's reproductive system. It is about the size of a walnut. It is located inside the body, between the bladder and the penis. It surrounds the upper part of the tube that carries urine from the bladder out through the penis. The prostate makes fluid that nourishes sperm and helps carry it out of the body during sex.

The sooner cancer is found and treated, the better your chances for recovery. However, even advanced cancer can usually be treated. Treatment may slow or stop the growth of the cancer and ease symptoms for a time. Ask your healthcare provider what you can expect with the type of cancer that you have.

What is the cause?

The cause of prostate cancer is not known. Some things do seem to increase the risk of prostate cancer, such as:

- **Age:** The chance of getting prostate cancer gets higher as you get older. Prostate cancer is rarely found in men younger than 45. Most men diagnosed with prostate cancer are older than 65.
- **Family history:** Your risk is 2 to 3 times higher if your father or brother had prostate cancer.
- **Race:** Prostate cancer is more common and more likely to be deadly in African-American men.
- **Diet and obesity:** Studies suggest that if you eat a diet high in red meat and fat, you have a higher risk for prostate cancer. If you eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, your risk may be lower. If you are overweight, you may be more likely to die of it.

What are the symptoms?

Prostate cancer often has no symptoms, especially in the early stages. When symptoms do appear, they may include:

- Trouble starting or stopping the flow of urine
- A weak flow of urine
- Frequent and urgent need to urinate, especially at night
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Pain or burning when you urinate
- Trouble having an erection, or pain when semen comes out of the penis during sex
- Frequent pain in the lower back, hips, or upper thighs (usually because of a spread of the cancer beyond the prostate gland)

Some of these symptoms can be caused by other problems, such as infection or an enlarged prostate. It's normal for men to have an enlarged prostate as they get older. If you have any of the signs or symptoms listed above, you should see your healthcare provider so that problems can be diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

What is metastasis?

The spread of cancer cells from one part of the body to other parts is called metastasis. What causes cancer to spread is not known. Cancer cells can:

- Grow into the area around the tumor
- Travel to other parts of the body through the bloodstream or the lymph system. The lymph system has nodes that make blood cells to fight infection and vessels that carry fluid from the body back into the bloodstream.

New tumors then grow in these other areas. When prostate cancer spreads, it most often affects the bones, but can also spread to the lungs and liver.

Sometimes your first symptoms of cancer are in the part of the body where the cancer has spread. The symptoms of prostate cancer that has spread to another part of your body depend on where the tumors are. For example:

- If the cancer has spread to the lungs, you may have a cough or trouble breathing.
- If the cancer has spread to the bones, you may have bone pain.
- If the cancer has spread to the liver, you may have yellowish skin, pain, or swelling in your belly.

How is it diagnosed?

Prostate cancer is often found during a routine exam or an exam done for some other problem. A rectal exam and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test may be done to screen for prostate cancer.

- During a rectal exam, your healthcare provider puts a finger into the rectum to feel the prostate gland. Prostate cancers feel very hard compared to normal prostate tissue. If your provider feels something abnormal, then you may have other tests for cancer.
- The PSA test is a blood test. PSA is a protein made by the prostate gland. The higher your PSA level, the more likely it is that cancer is present. However, like many cancer-screening tools, the PSA test is not perfect and can give misleading results. A normal result does not always mean that there is no cancer in the prostate. And if the result is high, it may not be caused by cancer. There can be other reasons for a high PSA.

The benefits of prostate cancer screening are not certain. Men younger than age 75 should talk to their healthcare provider about the benefits and harms of screening. The current recommendations are that men age 75 and older do not need to be screened for prostate cancer.

Having a biopsy to remove and test prostate tissue is the only sure way to diagnose prostate cancer. You may have other tests such as:

- X-rays of the area where you have pain
- Bone scan, which uses a radioactive chemical to look at the bones
- MRI scan, which uses a powerful magnetic field and radio waves to take pictures from different angles to show thin cross sections of parts of the body

How is it treated?

Some things to think about when making treatment decisions are:

- Your age
- Your overall health
- The stage of the cancer (how advanced the cancer is)
- Where the cancer has spread

If you are diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer that is growing slowly, you may choose to put off treatment until test results show that your prostate cancer is growing or changing. Your healthcare provider will check you regularly, such as every 3 to 6 months. This is called active surveillance.

Other possible treatments are:

- Surgery to remove part or all of the prostate gland.
- Surgery to remove both testicles. The testicles make the male hormone, testosterone.
- Injections of hormone blocker medicine to prevent the testicles from making testosterone.
- Hormone therapy with the female hormone estrogen
- Chemotherapy (anticancer drugs), which uses medicine to kill cancer cells
- Radiation therapy, which uses high-energy X-rays to kill cancer cells

Your treatment will also include:

- Preventing infections
- Controlling pain or other symptoms you may have
- Controlling the side effects from treatments
- Helping you manage your life with cancer

Often, more than 1 treatment is used. After treatment, you will need to have regular follow-up visits with your healthcare provider.

Ask your healthcare provider about clinical trials that might be available to you. Clinical trials are research studies to find effective cancer treatments. It's always your choice whether you take part in one or not.

How can I take care of myself?

If you have been diagnosed with prostate cancer:

- Talk about your cancer and treatment options with your healthcare provider. Make sure you understand your choices.
- Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider.

- Ask your healthcare provider:
 - How and when you will hear your test results
 - How long it will take to recover
 - What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
 - How to take care of yourself at home
 - What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

Other things that may help include:

- Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise and rest.
- Try to reduce stress and take time for activities that you enjoy. It may help to talk with a counselor about your illness.
- Talk with your family and your healthcare providers about your concerns. Ask your healthcare provider any questions you have about the disease, treatments, side effects of the treatments, sexuality, support groups, and anything else that concerns you.
- If you smoke, try to quit.
- Ask your provider if you need to avoid drinking alcohol. It may interfere with medicines you are taking. Alcohol can also make it harder for white blood cells to fight infections.
- Tell your provider if your treatment causes discomfort. Usually there are ways to help you be more comfortable.

How can I help prevent the cancer from spreading or coming back?

- Complete the full course of radiation, hormone, or chemotherapy treatments recommended by your healthcare provider.
- See your healthcare provider right away if you notice a return of any previous signs or symptoms or develop any new ones.

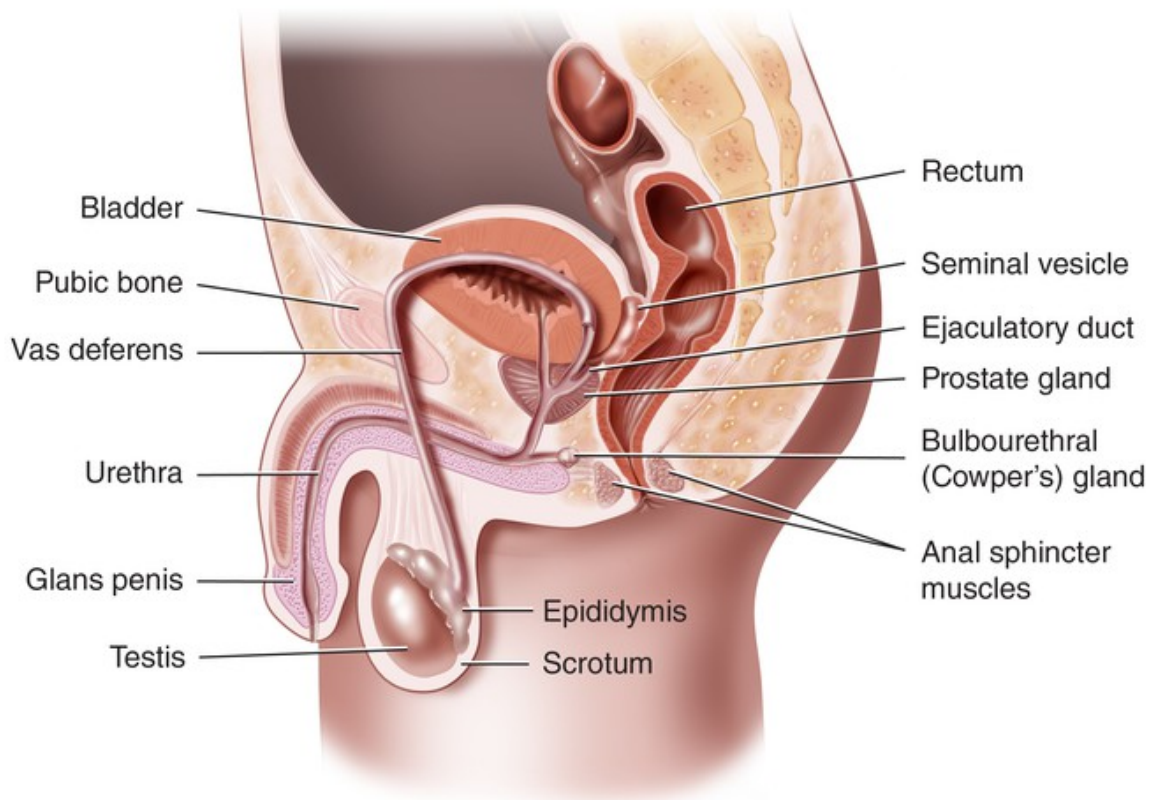
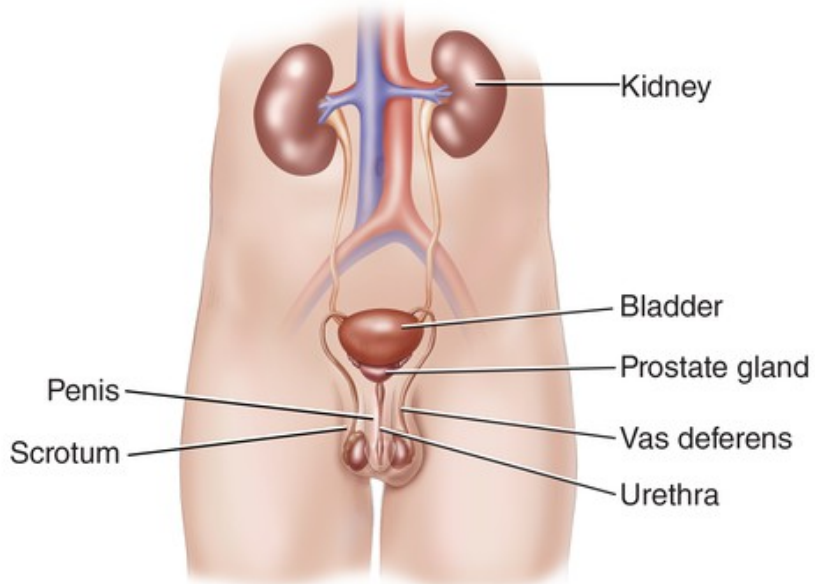
For more information, contact:

- American Cancer Society, Inc.
800-227-2345
<http://www.cancer.org>
- National Cancer Institute
800-422-6237 (TTY: 800-332-8615)
<http://www.cancer.gov>

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Male Pelvis



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