Prostate Cancer

American Cancer Society

Reviewed February 2014

What we'll be talking about

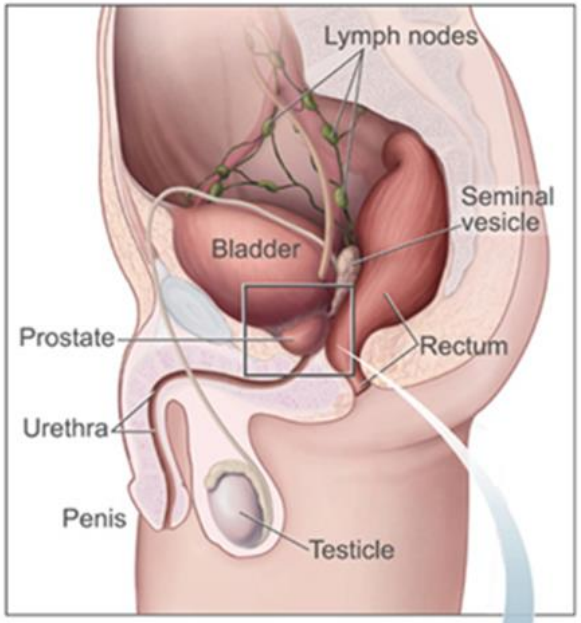
- How common is prostate cancer?
- What is prostate cancer?
- What causes it?
- What are the risk factors?
- Can prostate cancer be prevented?
- Tests to find prostate cancer early
- What you can do
- More information

Prostate cancer: How common is it?

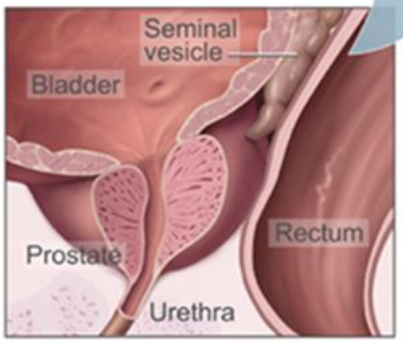
- The cancer most often diagnosed in men in the U.S.
- For reasons that remain unclear, it occurs more often in African American men than in any other group in the U.S.
- Is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in men in the U.S.

What is the prostate?

- The prostate is a gland found only in men.
- It is part of the reproductive system and helps to make semen.
- It is located in front of the rectum and under the bladder.
- A healthy prostate gland is about the size of a walnut.



This shows the prostate and nearby organs.



This shows the inside of the prostate, urethra, rectum, and bladder.

What is prostate cancer?

- Cancer is the growth of abnormal cells.
- Cancer cells can invade and damage normal tissue.
- Prostate cancer starts in the cells of the prostate.
- Some prostate cancers can grow and spread quickly. **But most of them grow slowly.**

Causes of prostate cancer

- We do not know the cause of prostate cancer.
- Most likely cause is related to changes in the genetic material (DNA) in our cells.
- DNA changes can be passed down through families, or can occur due to environment or lifestyle.

Prostate cancer risk factors

- Age
  - More than 6 out of 10 prostate cancers are found in men older than 65.
- Race/Ethnicity
  - African-American men and Jamaican men of African ancestry have the highest risk and are more likely to be diagnosed at an advanced stage.
  - The reasons for these racial differences are unclear.

Prostate cancer risk factors

- Family history
  - Having a father or brother with prostate cancer more than doubles a man's risk of developing this disease.
  - The risk is much higher for men with several affected relatives, particularly if their relatives were young at the time the cancer was found.
- Diet
  - High in red meat or high-fat dairy products and low in fruits and vegetables → *may* raise risk

Can prostate cancer be prevented?

Because the exact cause of prostate cancer is not known, at this time it is not possible to prevent most cases of the disease.

Known risk factors such as age, race, and family history cannot be controlled.

Lowering prostate cancer risk

There are things that can be done that may help lower the risk of prostate cancer.

- Eat right
  - Choose foods and beverages in amounts that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
  - At least 2½ cups of vegetables and fruits each day
  - Choose whole grains instead of refined grain products
  - Limit red meats and processed meats

Lowering prostate cancer risk

- Supplements
  - No vitamins or supplements have been proven to lower the risk of prostate cancer.
  - Taking any supplements can have risks and benefits. **Talk to your doctor before starting any vitamins or other supplements.**

Early detection of prostate cancer

- Screening is testing to find cancer, or other disease, in people who have no symptoms.
- Screening can help find cancers in an early stage when they are small, have not spread, and are more easily cured.
- Screening for prostate cancer can be done with:
  - **P**rostate-**S**pecific **A**ntigen (PSA) blood test
  - **D**igital **R**ectal **E**xam (DRE)

Screening tests most often used

- Prostate-specific antigen (PSA)

  Made by cells in the prostate gland

  Most healthy men have a small amount of PSA [less than 4 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL)] in their blood

- Digital rectal exam (DRE)

  Doctor puts their gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to feel for any bumps or hard areas on the prostate that might be cancer

  May be uncomfortable, but causes no pain and only takes a short time

Screening for prostate cancer

- There are limits to the current screening methods:

  Neither the PSA test nor the DRE is 100% accurate.

  Abnormal results of these tests don't always mean that cancer is present, and normal results don't mean that there is no cancer.

  If cancer is found, neither test can tell how likely the cancer is to grow and spread.

ACS Recommendations for the Early Detection of Prostate Cancer

- ACS does not support routine testing for prostate cancer at this time.
- A health care professional should discuss the potential benefits and limitations of prostate cancer with men.
- Prostate cancer testing should not be done without giving each man a chance to make an informed decision.

ACS Recommendations for the Early Detection of Prostate Cancer

- This discussion should begin in men with at least a 10-year life expectancy…
  - At age 50 for men at average risk for prostate cancer
  - At age 45 for men at high risk for prostate cancer
    - African American men
    - Men who have a first-degree relative (father, brother, or son) diagnosed with prostate cancer at an early age (younger than age 65)
  - At age 40 for men at even higher risk
    - Those with several first-degree relatives who had prostate cancer at an early age

Why doesn't the ACS recommend prostate cancer screening for all men?

- Prostate cancer is not always life-threatening.

  Most prostate cancers grow slowly.

  Many men who die of other causes are found at autopsy to have prostate cancer that caused them no problems during life.

  Although about 1 out of every 7 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime, only 1 man in 36 will die from the disease.

Why doesn't the ACS recommend prostate cancer screening for all men?

- As of yet, there is no proof that finding prostate cancer early through testing will have a positive impact for most men.
  - Testing clearly helps some men, but in others it leads to diagnosis and treatment of cancers that would never have caused harm.
  - Prostate cancer treatment has side effects.
    - Side-effects include impotence and incontinence, which can have a major impact on the quality of a man's life.

So what can <u>you</u> do now about prostate cancer?

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What you can do

- Talk to your doctor about your known risk factors and what you can do to lower your risk.
- Starting at age 50, or earlier, talk to your doctor about whether or not you want to be tested.
- Tell other men about the importance of talking to a doctor about the positives and negatives of prostate cancer testing and treatment.

More information

You can get more information on prostate cancer on our website, www.cancer.org, or call 1-800-227-2345 and talk with one of our Cancer Information Specialists.

- Prostate Cancer: Early Detection
- Prostate Cancer – A detailed guide
- Prostate Cancer Overview
- Managing Incontinence After Prostate Cancer Treatment

Each of these is also available in Spanish.

Thank you!

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