



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Public Health
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Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
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Prostate Cancer

Fact Sheet

Prostate Cancer...important information for you

What is Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer is a disease that starts in the prostate. The prostate is a male sex gland about the size of a walnut. It is located just below the bladder. After skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. The good news is that thousands of men across America have survived it.

Am I at Risk for Prostate Cancer?

Anyone can get prostate cancer but there are reasons why some men are more likely to get it than others. These reasons are called risk factors.

Risk factors for prostate cancer are:

- Age. The risk for prostate cancer increases as you get older.
- Family history. If you have a close relative, such as a father or brother, with prostate cancer, your risk for prostate cancer increases.
- Hormones. High levels of the male hormone, testosterone, have been associated with prostate cancer. Testosterone is important to the growth of the reproductive organs and body and facial hair.
- Being African American.

Other possible risk factors include:

- Drinking more than one alcoholic drink a day.
- A history of non-cancerous prostate disease.
- Smoking.
- Physical inactivity.
- A diet high in fat.

Can Prostate Cancer Be Prevented?

To lower your chances of getting prostate cancer:

- Eat a low-fat diet. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially cooked tomatoes, and cut back on meat.
- Drink no more than one 12 ounce can of beer, one 5 ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor a day.
- Don't smoke!
- Be more physically active. Walk, play sports, dance.
- Take good care of yourself. Get enough rest and try to reduce stress.

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What Else Should I Know About Prostate Cancer?

You should talk to your doctor, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner about prostate cancer if:

- You are age 50 or older, or
- You are age 40 or older and are African American, or
- You are age 40 or older and have a family history of prostate cancer.

Then you can decide if you want to be screened.

There are two common screening tests.

- Digital rectal exam (DRE). The DRE is when the health care clinician places a finger in the rectum to feel for anything abnormal.
- Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. This will tell you how much PSA is in the blood. High PSA levels are associated with prostate disease, including prostate cancer.

What are Some Symptoms of Prostate Cancer?

Most men with prostate cancer have no symptoms. Take a look at the following list. If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to have your doctor, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner check them out. Do not ignore them. These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have prostate cancer.

- Urinating often, especially at night.
- Difficulty urinating.
- Pain or burning sensation when urinating.
- Pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or thighs.
- Pain during sex.
- Suddenly not being able to have sexual intercourse.

Some less common symptoms include:

- Blood in the urine.
- Loss of appetite.
- Feeling weak and tired. This may be caused by anemia. Anemia occurs when your body tissues are not getting enough oxygen.

To find out more about prostate cancer, ask your health care professional or call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
617-624-5070
TTY: 617-624-5992