

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers in men worldwide and one of the leading causes of death from cancer in men. In the United States 1 in 6 men will develop prostate cancer. The Caribbean region has a particularly high incidence of this type of cancer. The good news is that more men are surviving a prostate cancer diagnosis.

Where is the Prostate?

The prostate is a part of the male reproductive system. It is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. It is normally the size of a walnut. Its primary function is the production of seminal fluid.

What is Prostate Cancer?

Our body is made up of cells. When these cells begin to multiply in an abnormal manner cancer can develop. Prostate cancer occurs when this process occurs in the prostate tissue. This type of cancer often develops slowly.

What increases my risk?

Risk factor is anything that increases the likelihood that you will develop a disease. Having a risk factor does not mean that you will develop a disease. Risk factors for prostate cancer include:

Age - The older you are the greater your chances of developing prostate cancer. Risk increases dramatically after the age of 50 years. Two-thirds of all cases are found in men over the age of 65.

Family history of prostate cancer - You may be at increased risk if your father, brother or son has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Your risk may be greater if your relative's cancer was diagnosed at an early age.

Race - Prostate cancer is more common in men with dark skin in comparison to white or Asian men.

Diet - Research suggests that eating a diet high in fat and/or red meat may increase your risk.

What decreases my risk?

The research is controversial but there are suggestions that dietary considerations may lower your risk. These include:

Eating 5 – 10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Tomatoes, pink grapefruit and watermelon contain **Lycopenes** which are believed to lower your risk of prostate cancer.

Additionally, **Selenium** found in seafood, brazil nuts and whole grains may also lower your risk.

Physical Activity - Being physically active by exercising a minimum of 45 minutes on a minimum of five days a week may lower your risk.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Many men with prostate cancer never know they have it as early prostate cancer often has no signs or symptoms. Symptoms of prostate cancer that you may notice are:

- Difficulty or pain in passing urine.
- Having to rush to the toilet to pass urine.

- Increased need to pass urine especially at night.
- Starting and stopping while urinating.
- Dribbling urine.
- A feeling of not having emptied your bladder fully.
- Blood or pus in your urine or semen.
- Impotence.
- Pain in your back, hips or pelvis.
- Pain during ejaculation.

Screening

Screening refers to looking for the presence of a disease or condition before symptoms develop. Based on the scientific, peer-reviewed evidence there is no standard or routine screening test for prostate cancer recommended by any major scientific or medical organizations at this time. There is insufficient evidence as to whether the benefits of testing for early prostate cancer outweigh the disadvantages. However, the Cayman Islands Cancer Society suggests that men discuss screening for prostate cancer with their doctor and seriously consider having both a digital rectal exam (DRE) and prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test yearly beginning at age 50.

Men who are at increased risk because of their *race* or *family history* should have this discussion with their doctor by the age of 40.

What is a digital rectal exam?

A DRE is a manual examination of the prostate. The doctor will insert a gloved finger through the rectum to feel for any abnormality in the size or shape of the prostate.

What is transrectal ultrasound?

Trans rectal Ultrasound can also be used to screen for prostate cancer although it is more commonly used as a diagnostic test. A small probe is inserted through the rectum and produces images of the prostate on a video screen

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)

What is the PSA test?

PSA is an abbreviation for prostate specific antigen. This means it is a substance only produced by the prostate. Elevations in its level MAY be indicative of prostate cancer. The PSA test is a blood test that measures the amount of PSA in the blood. An increase in PSA does not mean that you have prostate cancer but it does indicate that you may be at increased risk for prostate cancer. PSA levels can be elevated for other reasons.

Why might my PSA be elevated?

Your PSA number increases with age. However, it may be elevated if you have prostate cancer. Other medical conditions can also cause your PSA level to be elevated. Certain medications including herbal products can also elevate your PSA. It is also believed that engaging in sexual intercourse 48 hours prior to the test may elevate the level.

What are the advantages of PSA testing?

A PSA test may detect prostate cancer at an early stage before you develop symptoms and at a stage when it can be effectively treated. A normal test may provide you with reassurance.

What are the disadvantages of PSA testing?

The test is NOT cancer specific meaning that it will NOT detect all prostate cancers. Your PSA may be within normal ranges and you may in fact have prostate cancer. It is also important to note that many men with an elevated PSA do NOT have prostate cancer. However, you may need additional tests to confirm this.

Where can I get a PSA test?

Your doctor may do the PSA test in his/her office. If not he/she can order one and you can have it done at any medical laboratory.

What if I can't afford a PSA test?

If you do not have an insurance plan that covers the cost of a PSA test you may contact the Cayman Islands Cancer Society for a voucher for a free test.

Contact us

For more information on prostate cancer or the Cayman Islands Cancer Society, please contact us.

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