

# Prostate cancer



Prostate cancer is the most prevalent cancer in men which becomes more common with age. It is a malignant growth within the gland positioned in the urethra. As with most forms of cancer, the earlier the cancer is detected, the better the outcome.

## Causes

Although the causes of prostate cancer are unknown, experts have determined several risk factors. These include:

- **Family history:** If you have an immediate relative (a brother or father) with a history of prostate cancer, the risk increases.
- **Age:** Prostate cancer is seldom diagnosed before the age of 40, but more than 75% of all prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 65.
- **Lifestyle:** An unhealthy, sedentary lifestyle increases your risk of prostate cancer.

## Diagnosis

If the prostate cancer grows to involve the urethra or bladder outlet, it may cause problems such as difficulty in urination, decreased force of the urine stream, frequency (urinating more often than normal), urgency (an intense need to urinate), urinary retention (a sudden inability to pass urine), repeated urinary tract infections, and/or blood in the urine or semen. If prostate cancer spreads, it can cause swollen glands, bone pain, weight loss, anaemia (shortage of red blood cells), and shortness of breath.

## Tests for prostate cancer include:

- **A PSA test:** PSA is a substance secreted by the prostate that can be measured via blood tests. Although the amount of PSA in a man's

blood increases with age, higher than normal PSA levels can be one clue that prostate cancer has developed within the gland.

- **A rectal examination:** This is done by a doctor to check for abnormalities of organs or other structures in the pelvis and lower abdominal region.
- **A biopsy:** Some tissue from the prostate is removed (usually using a needle inserted through the rectum) for laboratory testing, and is used to confirm a diagnosis.

## Treatment

A number of factors are considered when planning the best treatment options, such as the extent of the cancer, whether the cancer will grow and spread rapidly, age and life expectancy, any underlying health conditions that would increase the risks of surgery or other treatments, and willingness to risk side effects.

Some of the treatment options for prostate cancer are: surgical removal of the prostate (called radical prostatectomy); radiation therapy; chemotherapy; and treatments to eliminate the stimulating effect of testosterone on prostate cancer.

For more information, visit your health-care professional or use the e|Care 'Ask a professional' service after you have logged in. This is a confidential service where you can ask a qualified doctor any health question and get a response within 48 hours.