

SEPTEMBER—PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness month. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among American men. The Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) estimates that more than 500 men in the United States are diagnosed with prostate cancer each day. Raising awareness can help friends and family be more knowledgeable and make more informed decisions about their prostate health.

What Is the Prostate?

The prostate is a small, walnut-sized gland that is a part of a male's reproductive system. Its function is to make fluid that becomes a part of semen. The prostate is located under the bladder, in front of the rectum, and surrounding the urethra (a tube that allows flow of urine or semen out of the body).

What Is Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer is an abnormal growth of cells in the prostate gland. This type of cancer usually grows slowly and most of the time does not cause symptoms in its early stages. The majority of men with prostate cancer will not die due to the disease, and many never even know they have it. Other cases may be more aggressive and can spread quickly. Prostate cancer that is detected early has a better chance of successful treatment.

What Are the Symptoms?

Prostate cancer may or may not cause symptoms in its early stages. Men that do experience symptoms may notice changes in urination or sexual function. However, these symptoms can also be caused by other conditions that are not prostate cancer. Possible symptoms may include:

- Weak flow of urine
- Painful ejaculation
- Frequent urination
- Pain or burning while urinating
- Difficulty urinating
- Blood in urine or semen
- Erectile dysfunction
- Pain in back, hips, or pelvis that does not go away

What Are the Risk Factors?

The following risk factors have been linked to an increased chance of getting prostate cancer:

- **Age**- more than half of all prostate cancers occur in men over 65 years of age
- **Family history**- certain inherited genes may cause prostate cancer to run in families
- **Race**- African American men show the highest incidence of prostate cancer

What are the Screening Options?

There has been a lot of controversy between medical experts about whether men with no symptoms of prostate cancer benefit from prostate cancer screening. It is important to discuss with your healthcare provider about your risk factors. Together you can decide whether prostate cancer screening is right for you. Below are two common prostate cancer screening tests:

- **Digital rectal exam (DRE)**: During a DRE, the physician will insert a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to examine the prostate for size, lumps, or anything abnormal.
- **Prostate specific antigen (PSA) test**: The PSA test measures the level of PSA in a drawn blood sample. PSA is a substance made by the prostate gland and tends to be higher in men with prostate cancer. However, PSA can also be elevated in other conditions that are not cancer.

How is Prostate Cancer Treated?

Prostate cancer treatment options depend on several factors, such as how fast the cancer is growing, how much it has spread, overall health status, and life expectancy. The benefits of treatment must be weighed against the potential risks or side effects. In some cases, treatment can lead to worsen quality of life than no treatment at all.

- **Watchful waiting**- Some men may not need treatment right away, if at all. Active surveillance is where the cancer is closely monitored and treatment is started if it seems to be growing or getting worse.
- **Hormone therapy**- Prostate cancer relies on the male hormone testosterone to grow. Hormone therapy stops the body from producing testosterone, causing the cancer cells to grow more slowly or to die.
- **Surgery**- Prostatectomy is an operation where the prostate is completely removed. Orchiectomy is a different operation where the testicles are removed to reduce testosterone production.
- **Radiation therapy**- Radiation therapy uses high-powered energy beams to target and kill cancer cells.

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.