

Prostate cancer.

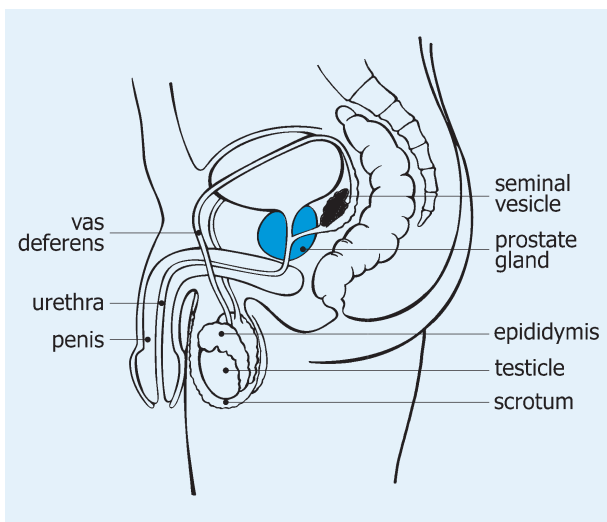


13 11 20
Cancer Council



What is the prostate?

The prostate is a small gland that is part of the male reproductive system. It sits below the bladder, in front of the rectum and is about the size of a walnut. The prostate surrounds the urethra, a tube that takes urine from the bladder through the penis and out of the body. It produces nutrient-filled fluid that helps to feed and protect sperm, which forms part of semen.



Non-cancerous growth of the prostate

The male sex hormone (testosterone) controls how the prostate grows. It is normal for the prostate to grow bigger with age. This growth is called BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia). This is not prostate cancer and will not turn into prostate cancer. BPH can cause difficulties when urinating (peeing) or urinating more often due to the prostate pressing on the urethra.

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer begins when abnormal cells in the prostate start to grow in an uncontrolled manner, and form into a cancerous (malignant) tumour or mass. Most prostate cancers grow slowly, but not all.

Early (localised) prostate cancer means that cancer cells have grown but have not spread outside of the prostate.

Locally advanced prostate cancer means the cancer has spread outside of the prostate capsule or to nearby parts of the body such as to the bladder or lymph nodes close to the prostate.

Metastatic (advanced) prostate cancer means the cancer has spread to distant parts of the body such as other distant lymph nodes, or other organs or bones.

Who gets prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian men. There were around 24,000 men diagnosed with prostate cancer in Australia in 2022.

It is estimated that

1 in 6 men

will get prostate cancer
by the age of 85.



Prostate cancer has one of the highest survival rates, with 95 per cent of men likely to survive five years or more if the cancer is found in the earlier stages.

What causes prostate cancer?

The causes of prostate cancer are not well understood but we do know of a number of factors that can increase your risk of prostate cancer, including:

Age

The risk of developing prostate cancer increases with age with the majority of cases occurring in men over the age of 50.

Family history

Having a father, brother, or son who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. This risk increases if the relative was diagnosed before the age of 60 or if more than one close relative has been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Having a strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer, especially if the cancer is known to be caused by a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Early prostate cancer usually does not cause symptoms.

Urinary symptoms that may occur are also common in men who have other medical conditions, such as a non-cancerous growth of the prostate. These symptoms do not mean you have cancer, but it is important to see your doctor if you experience one or more of the following symptoms.

- A change in need or urgency to go to the toilet.
- Difficulty when urinating, such as trouble starting a stream of urine, having a weak stream, or dribbling urine after finishing.

- A feeling that the bladder is not emptying completely.
- Being unable to control the bladder (incontinence).
- Pain or burning during urination or ejaculation.
- Blood in the urine or semen.
- Persistent pain in the back, hips or upper thighs.
- Unexplained weight loss, weakness, and/or tiredness.

Finding it early

As with most types of cancer, there is a better chance of successful treatment if the cancer is found early. There is no routine population-wide screening program for finding prostate cancer early. However, PSA (prostate specific antigen) testing has been shown to have a benefit for some men. If you are over the age of 50, or over the age of 40 (with a family history of prostate, breast or ovarian cancer), it's recommended that you speak to your doctor about whether you may benefit from PSA testing.



PSA (prostate specific antigen) testing

There are tests that doctors can use to decide if further investigation is needed to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of prostate cancer. The PSA test measures the amount of PSA in the blood. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate cells and helps with fertility. Some of the PSA made goes into your blood. PSA levels in the blood can vary from person to person and can be elevated not only in prostate cancer but due to age, prostate size, infection or inflammation, certain medications, after vigorous exercise (such as cycling) and after ejaculation. The PSA test has both pros and cons that should be carefully considered.

What are the pros and cons of PSA testing?

If you are considering having a PSA test, you should discuss your individual risk with your doctor and decide together whether the test is right for you.

Pros

A PSA test may help detect a prostate cancer and can detect it early, when it is small and potentially curable. Finding an early stage (local) cancer means it can be treated before it spreads, and the likelihood of successful treatment is greater.

Cons

An elevated PSA test means that there is a higher-than-normal PSA level but doesn't necessarily mean that cancer is present. This may lead to further medical investigations such as an MRI and/or a prostate biopsy. These tests may create anxiety or worry even in cases where no cancer is detected.

In some cases, where prostate cancer is diagnosed and treated, it may be that the treatment undertaken was not necessary because the cancer was slow growing and not harmful in the longer term. Side effects from that treatment could negatively affect your quality of life. This needs to be considered versus the risk of harm from the prostate cancer.


Major side effects of treatment for prostate cancer can include:

- Erectile dysfunction and other sexual function side effects.
- Urinary incontinence and other urinary problems.
- Bowel problems (which are rare).

Depending on the type of prostate cancer, the recommendation may be to have it monitored (active surveillance) instead of undergoing any immediate treatment.

What can I do?

Remember:

- Prostate cancer that is found early, has a better chance of successful treatment.
 - Early stages of prostate cancer rarely cause symptoms.
 - If you are concerned about your risk of prostate cancer, talk to your doctor.
 - If you are experiencing any urinary symptoms, see your doctor.
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ONE IN THREE CANCERS CAN BE PREVENTED.



Make smoking history

- Plan and prepare to quit and stay quit.



Be SunSmart

- Protect your skin when the UV is 3 or above.



Eat more plants

- Include plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruit, wholegrains, nuts and seeds.



Be active

- Sit less and move more every day.



Avoid alcohol

- Have alcohol-free days and swap to low- or no-alcohol drinks.



Avoid excess weight gain

- Eat well and be physically active.



Make time for your health

- Participate in screening and vaccination programs.
- Visit a health care professional if you notice a change in your body.



For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, speak to a cancer nurse on **13 11 20**. Calls are confidential and available statewide Monday to Friday during business hours. Local call costs apply, except for mobiles.