

# Prostate cancer

If prostate cancer is found and treated early, you have a very good chance of getting better.

## What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer develops when some cells in the prostate don't work properly. These cells start to grow out of control and form a tumour. Not all tumours are cancer, but they need to be tested in case they are.

## What are the signs of prostate cancer?

You can have prostate cancer without noticing anything is wrong. Or you might notice some warning signs like:

- needing to pee/wee (urinate) often
- slow flow of pee
- feeling pain or burning when you pee
- blood in the pee
- having trouble getting an erection
- feeling pain when ejaculating (when sperm and semen come out of the penis).

These signs do not always mean you have prostate cancer, but it's important to see your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms. Your doctor will do some tests to work out if you have cancer or what the problem is.

## What tests will I have?

Some of the tests you may have include a:

- **Blood test** – Some blood will be taken from a vein in your arm and sent to a lab to check levels of a substance called prostate specific antigen (PSA).
- **Rectal examination** – Wearing a glove, your doctor will put their finger into your rectum to feel if your prostate is hard or an odd shape.
- **MRI scan** – You will lie on a table that slides into a special machine that takes pictures of your insides.
- **Biopsy** – The doctor will take a tiny piece of tissue from the prostate and send it to the lab for testing. You may have medicine to make you sleepy (a sedative or general anaesthetic) while you have this test.

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If you are uncomfortable about having any tests, you can ask a nurse, Aboriginal health worker or someone from your family or mob to be in the room with you.

**What do the test results mean?**

The test results will tell the doctor if you have prostate cancer, what type it is, and if the cancer has spread (the stage). The cancer may be:

- **Localised** – The cancer is small and is only in the prostate gland.
- **Locally advanced** – The cancer is larger and has spread outside the prostate gland to the area in your abdomen (belly) between the hips.
- **Advanced** – The cancer has spread outside of the prostate gland to other organs or the bones.

Knowing the stage of the cancer helps the doctors work out the best treatment for you.

**The prostate**

All men have a prostate gland. It is about the size of a walnut and is part of the male reproductive system.

**Side view**

**Prostate gland**

This makes some of the fluid in semen.

**Bladder**

This is where pee/wee (urine) is kept.

**Penis**

A man's sex organ.

**Urethra**

A tube that takes pee/wee from the bladder to the end of the penis. The urethra also carries semen during orgasm.

**Spine**

This is made of bone.

**Seminal vesicle**

**Rectum**

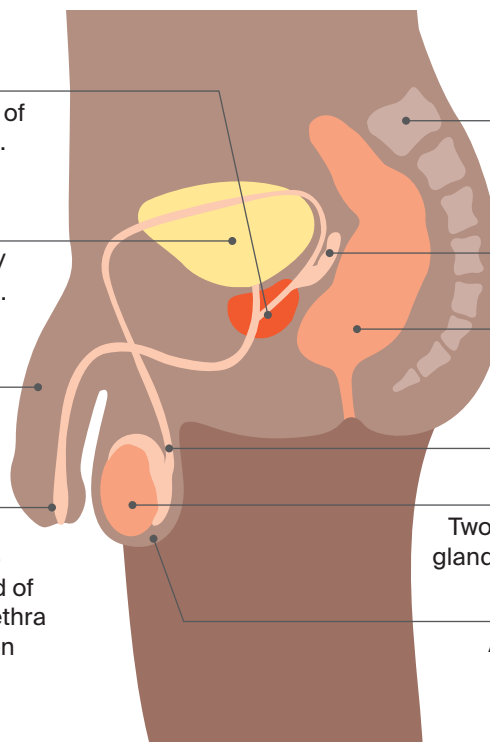
**Vas deferens**

**Testicles**

Two small, egg-shaped glands that make sperm.

**Scrotum**

A pouch of skin that holds the testicles.



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It's important to go to all of your treatment sessions. If you miss a session, it might become harder to treat the cancer.

**What treatment will I need for prostate cancer?**

There are different types of treatment for prostate cancer. You may have one or more of these treatments:

<b>Active surveillance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The doctor regularly checks that the cancer isn't getting worse, and only offers treatment if the cancer starts growing faster.</li> <li>• It is for cancer that's not causing you any trouble.</li> </ul>
<b>Surgery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This removes the prostate gland (this is called a radical prostatectomy).</li> </ul>
<b>Radiation therapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This uses radiation to kill or damage the cancer cells. It may be given to the outside of the body or inside the body.</li> </ul>
<b>Medicines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hormone treatment (also called androgen deprivation therapy or ADT) helps to stop your body making so much testosterone, because this hormone can make the cancer grow.</li> <li>• Special types of medicine called targeted therapy may be used to treat cancer at advanced stages.</li> </ul>
<b>Chemotherapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes called "chemo", chemotherapy is strong medicine that can kill the cancer cells.</li> </ul>
<b>Watchful waiting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is for cancer that's not likely to cause you any problems in your lifetime, or that may be very hard to treat.</li> <li>• The doctor checks on the cancer and helps you manage any symptoms you may get.</li> </ul>

**How will the treatment affect my body?**

Treatment for prostate cancer sometimes causes other problems called side effects. Some of the common ones include:

- **Trouble controlling your pee** – The surgery sometimes damages the muscles around the prostate.
- **Trouble getting an erection** – The nerves that control an erection pass through the prostate; sometimes the nerves are damaged during treatment.

There are usually things that can be done to help with these side effects. Yarn with your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal health worker if you have any of these troubles.

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**How do I cope with the cancer?**

• **Yarn with mob**

It's normal for you and your family to have lots of different feelings right now. You might find it helpful to yarn with family, mob or Elders about coping at this time.

• **Ask questions**

You may have many questions about the cancer, its treatment and how it will affect you. Your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal health worker will help answer any questions you may have.

• **Get help with travel**

If you have to travel a long way for treatment, you can get help to pay for travel and somewhere to stay. For more information, call 13 11 20.

• **Find support**

Call 13 11 20 if you need support.

**More information**

• **Cancer Council**

13 11 20  
Visit [aboriginal.cancercouncil.com.au](http://aboriginal.cancercouncil.com.au)

• **Menzies School of Health Research**

Visit [menzies.edu.au/cancer](http://menzies.edu.au/cancer)

This information was adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Menzies School of Health Research in consultation with a clinical advisory group and an Indigenous consultation group. Cancer Council NSW has updated this fact sheet in consultation with cancer experts and Aboriginal people with an experience of cancer.

This fact sheet features design elements from Cancer Council NSW's respect symbol, which was designed by Marcus Lee. Marcus was born and raised in Darwin, Northern Territory, and is a descendant of the Karajarri people. The Cancer Council Australia respect symbol (below) was designed by Riki Salam as part of his *Journey of Hope* artwork. Riki was born and raised in Cairns, Queensland, on Yidindji land, and has connections to Muralag, Kala Lagaw Ya, Meriam Mer and Kuku Yalanji peoples on his father's side and the Ngai Tahu people of New Zealand on his mother's side.



*Cancer Council acknowledges Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.*

Call 13 11 20  
if you need  
support.