



PROSTATE CANCER

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What is the prostate gland?

If you don't know what your prostate is, you're not alone – most men don't. But you should because millions of men suffer from prostate conditions that negatively influence their quality of life.

The prostate is part of a man's reproductive system. It is found in front of the rectum and under the bladder.

The prostate is doughnut shaped and surrounds the urethra, which is the urine and semen tube. A healthy prostate is about the size of a walnut.

The prostate is a gland. It makes part of the seminal fluid. During ejaculation, the seminal fluid helps carry sperm out of the man's body.

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is cancer that starts in the prostate gland. It is the most common non-skin cancer in men worldwide. Prostate cancer is the most common cause of death from cancer in men over the age of 75. Prostate cancer is rarely found in men younger than 40. If the prostate grows too large, it squeezes the urethra. This may slow or stop the normal flow of urine.

What are the warning signs?

- Frequent need to urinate especially at night
- Poor stream, dribbling, burning
- Sexual dysfunction
- Weight loss
- Bone pain



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But there are often no early symptoms, which is why it is important to have regular medical check ups.

Who is at risk of getting prostate cancer?

- Men older than 50
- Men with a family history of prostate cancer

If you have a family history of prostate cancer, you should screen from the age of 40. If you are not at high risk, then you should screen from the age of 50, unless you have any of the warning signs in which case you should screen immediately.

SCREENING FOR PROSTATE CANCER

The prostate exam

The only way a doctor can examine your prostate is to perform a digital rectal examination or finger test. He needs to insert a gloved lubricated finger into the rectum to press the bowel wall to check the size of prostate and for lumps. This can be uncomfortable, but a minute of discomfort can save your life. The prostate exam is considered to be the best screening test for prostate cancer. Early diagnosis is the best possible solution. Men can recover from prostate cancer.

EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)

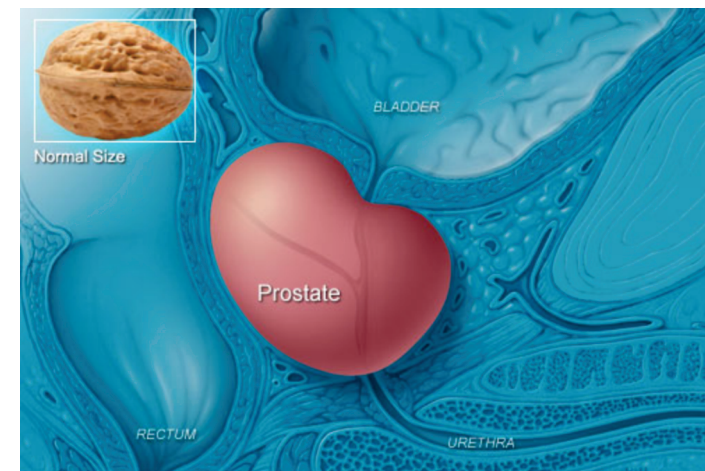
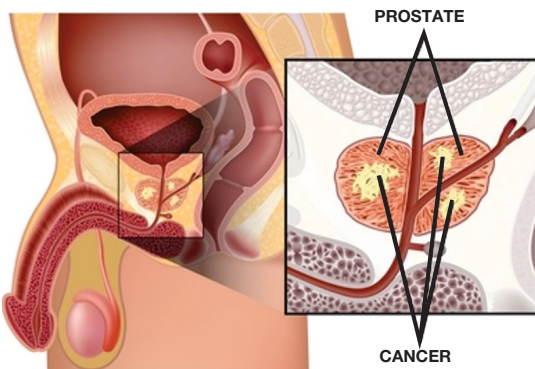
The blood test for prostate cancer is the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). The PSA test measures the blood level of PSA, a protein produced by the prostate gland. The higher a man's PSA level, the more likely it is that he has prostate cancer. But there are other reasons for a high PSA level, and some men who have prostate cancer do not have high PSA levels.

You need to have a detailed discussion with your doctor about the pros and cons of having a PSA test.

A study published in the European Journal of Cancer (October 2009) stated that prostate cancer screening reduced prostate cancer deaths by 37%. If either the physical exam or the PSA test suggests a problem your doctor might advise you to have a biopsy. A needle is inserted, under anaesthetic, either through the rectum wall or the skin between the rectum and scrotum. Multiple small tissue samples are removed and examined under a microscope. This is the best way to diagnose cancer and predict whether it is slow growing or aggressive.

When not to have a PSA test

You should not have a test after any manipulation of the prostate, for example, a scope of the bladder or of the colon. The result of the PSA test may also be influenced if you have an infection of the bladder or prostate.

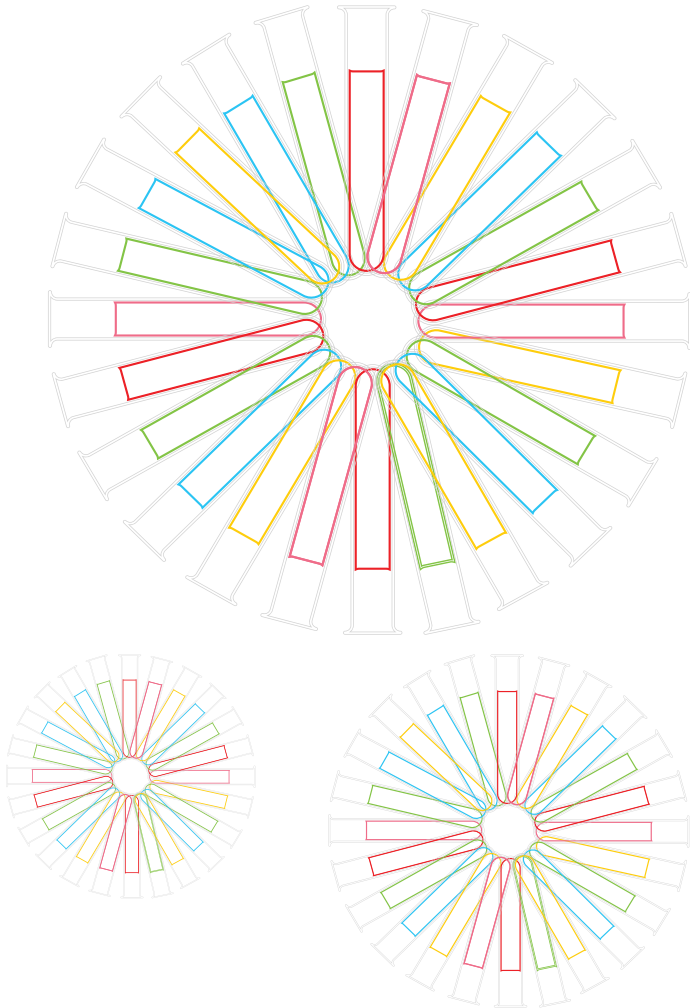


Treatment of prostate cancer

The various forms of treatment include surgery, radiation and hormone treatment, used singly or combined. Treatment is highly individualised and is planned according to clinical findings. The earlier prostate cancer is diagnosed, the better the outcome.

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