

Prostate cancer gives a new outlook on life

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Men who have prostate cancer often feel quite healthy, but the diagnosis still gives them a whole new outlook on life. Once they have learned to live with their cancer, they choose to focus on valuable relationships and appreciate the little things in life, shows a dissertation thesis from the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

"We need a better understanding of how men with prostate cancer experience their illness and how they choose to adapt their new circumstances," says district nurse Annikki Jonsson, who interviewed 37 men with prostate cancer for her thesis. "We can then support them better and tailor their treatment to the phase they are in."

The results show that the men go through different phases of adjustment in succession after getting their diagnosis, and that their everyday lives are affected differently according to which phase they are in.

Those with less serious prostate cancer find themselves in an emotional vacuum immediately after receiving their diagnosis. During this phase, which normally lasts around a week, it is pointless for medical personnel to try to give men information about their illness.

"But they do appreciate positive reception without pity during this initial phase. And, of course, if they do choose to get in touch and ask some questions, it's important to answer and tell where you can turn to with different thoughts."

Once these men have negotiated this initial phase, they regain control

over their lives and find their driving force for life. They begin actively seek out information about their illness.

Men who learn that they have an aggressive form of [prostate cancer](#) find that the disease is allways at present and they feel often a sense of emptiness during the initial period following the diagnosis. For these men, the disease is an existential threat.

They think a lot about how the future will be and how they will die.

"The men I interviewed said that they lived life more intense, but that they had their ups and downs," says Jonsson. "Sometimes they felt more alive, and in the next minute got a feeling that they risked losing control or being reminded of their changed masculinity."

The men were interviewed again two years after receiving their [diagnosis](#) . They told that they had realised that life is fragile, and they were aware that they did not know how long the life will be. They got more faith and trust in life and had discovered that they could preserve their autonomy and integrity despite their illness.

"Life changes, and it's important to achieve some kind of balance," says Jonsson. "The men focused their energy on the relationships which were valuable for them. They appreciated the little things in life in a different way nowadays and developed an inner strength to be true to themselves."

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

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