

# Prostate cancer: The basics every man needs to know

June 5 2023, by Miriam Jones Bradley, RN

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No man wants to hear that he has prostate cancer, but if he is diagnosed

he will need to learn about the disease and how it is treated.

Prostate cancer affects one in seven men. According to the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS), it is the second most common type of cancer among men after [skin cancer](#). With an estimated [288,300](#) new cases in the United States in 2023, it is important to know more about [prostate cancer](#) and what you can expect if you are the one in seven.

## What is prostate cancer?

The [prostate](#), a walnut-shaped organ, is part of men's reproductive organs, providing some of the seminal fluid. Living below the bladder, it surrounds the urethra through which urine drains and the seminal tube through which semen flows. As with other cancers, it begins when cells mutate, grow out of control and eventually damage and steal nutrients from the surrounding healthy cells, according to the ACS.

## Prostate cancer causes

While specific prostate cancer causes have not been identified, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists several [prostate cancer risk factors](#). These include:

- Age : The most common risk factor. The older you are, the more likely you are to develop prostate cancer
- Race: Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer, get it at a younger age, have advanced disease before it is diagnosed, and are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer
- Weight: Being overweight can increase your risk
- Genetics: Having a close family member who's been diagnosed with prostate cancer raises your risk

## Prostate cancer symptoms

According to [Mayo Clinic](#), prostate cancer symptoms are rare in the early stages. Once prostate cancer signs are noticed, it usually signals worsening of the disease. These signs include:

- Trouble urinating or decreased force of urination
- Blood in urine or semen
- Bone pain
- Erectile dysfunction
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained fever

Some of these symptoms can also be caused by other issues with the prostate, so more testing will be needed.

## Prostate cancer tests

There are two main [screening tests](#) for prostate cancer. Digital rectal exam (DRE) is performed by the physician to determine if there are changes in the prostate. Secondly, a [prostate-specific antigen \(PSA\)](#) blood test looks for elevated levels of PSA, which can indicate prostate cancer. However, many other things can affect the PSA level. If either of these is abnormal, the physician and patient may decide to proceed with a prostate biopsy. Each patient will want to discuss the [pros and cons](#) of prostate cancer screening with their physician to determine what is best for them, the CDC says.

## Prostate cancer stages

According to [ACS](#), there are 10 prostate cancer stages. Prostate cancer staging is a complex process, but is determined by the extent of the main

tumor, whether it has spread to [lymph nodes](#) or other parts of the body, the results of the PSA test, and the biopsy or surgery, which shows how likely the cancer is to grow and spread quickly. Prostate cancer staging helps the physicians determine the best treatment plan.

## Prostate cancer treatments

[Dr. Mitchell Humphreys](#), a urologist at Mayo Clinic, said in a [recent video](#) that prostate cancer treatment is most effective when the disease is caught early. However, "immediate treatment isn't always necessary. Keeping an eye on the cancer until it grows bigger is sometimes enough," he said. Beyond the wait-and-see approach, Humphreys lists the following prostate cancer treatments:

- Prostate cancer surgery to remove the cancer and sometimes the prostate itself, if it has not spread
- Radiation, which targets and kills the cancer cells
- Chemotherapy drugs that destroy cancer cells
- Cryotherapy, which freezes the [cancer cells](#), or high-intensity focused ultrasound, which kills cells with heat
- Androgen deprivation therapy, which blocks the production of testosterone

Many physicians and patients choose to take the "active surveillance" approach, according to research published recently in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#). While protecting the patient's health through close monitoring, it avoids the often difficult side effects of the treatment options.

## Prostate cancer survival rates

According to the [CDC](#), the five-year prostate cancer survival rate is just

over 97%. While prostate cancer can be a serious disease, most men with prostate cancer don't die from it. Per the CDC, more than 3.1 million men in the United States who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point are still alive today.

[Living with prostate cancer](#) can be stressful, no matter which treatment plan you choose. Healthy living habits such as exercise, [healthy diet](#), [weight loss](#), smoking cessation, and [emotional support](#) from family or support groups can all be helpful in managing this disease. In addition, you will need to follow-up regularly with your physician to watch for changes in your cancer.

While [cancer](#) is something no one wants to think about, Humphreys gives this advice and encouragement: "It's an important part of your health and an expert medical care team can guide you to the solutions that are most tailored for you, your wishes and your body."

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