

ASCO ANSWERS

PROSTATE CANCER

WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer is a disease in which normal cells in a man's prostate gland change and grow uncontrollably, forming a mass called a tumor. Some prostate cancers grow very slowly and may not cause symptoms for years. Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in men in the United States.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE PROSTATE?

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located behind the base of the penis, in front of the rectum, and below the bladder. It surrounds the urethra, the tube-like channel that carries urine and semen through the penis. The prostate makes seminal fluid, the liquid in semen that protects, supports, and helps transport sperm.

WHAT DO STAGE AND GRADE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing where the cancer is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. There are four stages for prostate cancer: stages I through IV (one through four). Prostate cancer is also given a grade called a Gleason score, which ranges from 6 to 10. Descriptions and illustrations of these stages can be found at www.cancer.net/prostate.

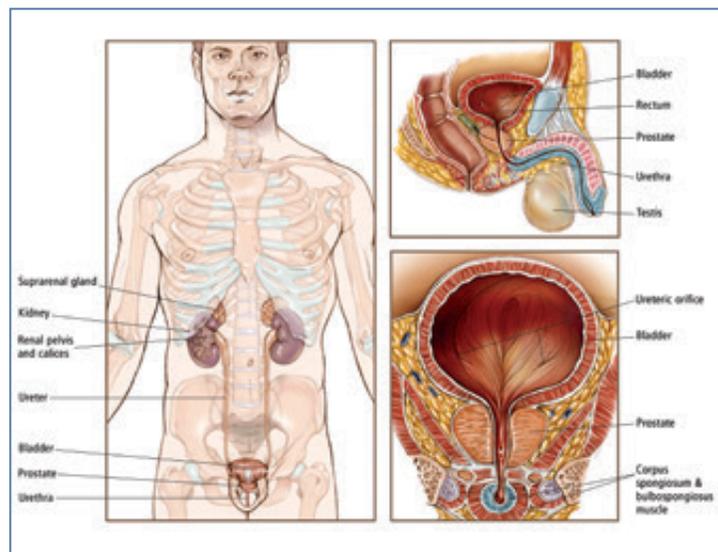
HOW IS PROSTATE CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of prostate cancer depends on the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the man's overall health. If prostate cancer is found at an early stage and is growing slowly, the doctor may recommend active surveillance, closely monitoring the cancer and starting active treatment only when it shows signs of spreading, causes pain, or blocks the urinary tract. When the tumor has not spread outside the prostate, treatment options include surgery to remove the prostate and nearby lymph nodes or radiation therapy. For men with a larger tumor or cancer that is more likely to return, hormone therapy may be given before surgery or radiation therapy may be given after surgery. Several months of hormone therapy may also be combined with radiation therapy. Hormone therapy, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy are the main treatment options for men with metastatic prostate cancer, while chemotherapy and other newer treatment options are used for men with castration-resistant prostate cancer. When making treatment decisions, men may also consider a clinical trial; talk with your doctor about all treatment options.

The side effects of prostate cancer treatment, including incontinence (inability to control urine flow) and sexual problems, can often be prevented or managed with the help of your health care team. This is called supportive care and is an important part of the overall treatment plan.

HOW CAN I COPE WITH PROSTATE CANCER?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your doctor are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, becoming organized, and considering a second opinion are other steps. Take care of yourself during this time. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.



Find additional cancer information at www.cancer.net.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your health care. Consider asking the following questions of your health care team:

- What type of prostate cancer do I have?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What stage and grade is the prostate cancer? What does this mean?
- Would you explain my treatment options? What clinical trials are open to me?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
- Who will be part of my treatment team, and what does each member do?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- How will this treatment affect my sex life?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to have children?
- What other long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with this concern?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/prostate.



Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO[®]

For more information, visit ASCO's patient website, www.cancer.net, or call 888-651-3038.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Benign:

A tumor that is not cancerous

Biopsy:

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

Chemotherapy:

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

Gleason score:

An important factor for prognosis; describes how much the tumor looks like healthy tissue

Lymph node:

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

Malignant:

A tumor that is cancerous

Metastasis:

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

Prognosis:

Chance of recovery

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA):

A tumor marker (a type of protein released by prostate tissue) that may be found at higher-than-normal levels in men with prostate cancer or another prostate condition

Radiation therapy:

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue

Urologic oncologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancers of the urinary tract