

Prostate cancer: Know your risk and the symptoms



Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers in men. It can be a serious disease but in most cases, prostate cancer can be treated. Know your risk and the symptoms to ensure early detection.

The prostate gland is shaped much like a doughnut, with the urethra (the urine tube which carries urine from the bladder to the outside) passing through the centre hole. The prostate produces a fluid that nourishes sperm and is ejaculated with semen, the fluid that carries sperm.

Risk factors

1. Family history.

If you have an immediate relative (father or brother) with prostate cancer, the risk increases 5 to 10 times.

2. Age.

Prostate cancer is seldom diagnosed before the age of 40, and more than 75% of all cases are diagnosed in men over age 65.

3. A diet high in fat.

A high intake of animal fat may increase prostate cancer risk. However, further research is necessary to confirm this.

Diagnosis

If the prostate cancer grows to involve the urethra or bladder outlet by expanding and compressing the urethra or by actually growing into the urethra it may cause the following problems:

- Difficulty in urination.
- Decreased force of the urine stream.
- Frequency (urinating more often than normal).
- Urgency (an intense need to urinate).
- Urinary retention (a sudden inability to pass urine if the obstruction becomes very severe).

- Repeated urinary tract infections.
- Blood in the urine or semen.
- If prostate cancer spreads, it can cause lymphadenopathy (swollen glands), bone pain, weight loss, anaemia (shortage of red blood cells), shortness of breath, and other symptoms.

Outcome

Prognosis is determined by the age of the patient at diagnosis, the overall health of the patient, the type of tumour (some are more aggressive than others), and whether the tumour has spread. Survival varies from two to three years to well over 10 years.

Three tips to help protect your prostate health.

1. Increase your intake of omega-3's.

Research has shown that men who ate dark fish such as salmon one or more times per week, had a 63% lower risk of developing an aggressive form of prostate cancer than those who ate it rarely.

2. Lower your cholesterol levels.

Research suggests that men whose cholesterol levels are below 200mg/dL have an almost 60% lower chance of suffering from an aggressive type of prostate cancer. You can reduce your cholesterol levels with regular exercise, weight-loss programmes, and a healthy diet.

3. A diet high in vegetables and fruit.

Eating more vegetables and fruit may decrease the risk of prostate cancer.

Speak to your doctor for further advice.