

Prostate Cancer and Men

Information from the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia www.prostate.org.au

Facts about Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Australian men after skin cancer, and the second highest cause of male cancer deaths. Every year in Australia 2600 men die of prostate cancer – equivalent to the number of women who die from breast cancer annually. It is important to note that prostate cancer is potentially curable if detected and treated while still confined to the prostate gland.

While prostate cancer is generally uncommon in men under the age of 50 years, younger men with a history of prostate cancer in their family can be more susceptible than those without a family history of cancer.

What is my overall risk of prostate cancer?

If there is no family history, a man has a 1 in 12 risk of developing prostate cancer in his lifetime.

If a first degree relative (brother or father) has a diagnosis of prostate cancer, the risk is increased 2-3 fold.

If two first degree relatives have had prostate cancer, the risk increases 5 fold.

What are the common reasons why men get tested, and should I?

Most men will seek testing for prostate cancer for the following reasons:

- As part of a general checkup, usually after 50 years of age
- Due to a recent experience with a relative or friend who has suffered from prostate cancer
- A family history of prostate cancer, or
- A recent onset of urinary symptoms which may have alerted the patient to that area of the body.

You should make up your own mind as to whether you wish to be tested after considering what your main concern was, what your risk of developing the cancer is, and after understanding the pros and cons of early detection.

How do I know if I have it?

In the early stages of development, prostate cancer seldom has any symptoms and is usually curable. Your own doctor can often identify it at this early stage. If prostate cancer advances and symptoms do develop, they are similar to those of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which is very common in older men. These include:

- The need to urinate frequently, particularly at night
- Sudden urges to urinate
- Difficulty in starting urine flow
- A slow, interrupted flow and dribbling afterwards, or
- Blood in the urine or semen and pain during urination.

What tests can I have to check?

At present there are two tests for prostate cancer:

The Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) - for this test the doctor uses a gloved finger to feel the prostate gland through the rectum. This may pick up hard lumps in the prostate before symptoms occur.

The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test - this is a test which measures the amount of PSA in the blood. A blood test will determine whether there is an elevated reading of PSA.

Around a third of men with an elevated PSA will have prostate cancer. Other harmless prostate conditions account for the rest.

Most organisations representing those who treat prostate cancer including the Urological Society of Australasia recommend that men between the age of 50 and 70 with a ten year life expectancy or greater should be aware of regular testing by PSA and DRE after informed consent.

How often should I be tested?

Annually from 50 to 70, unless there is a family history of prostate cancer, in which case it should be annually from 40 years to 70 years of age.

What are the treatment options?

The major dilemma with prostate cancer is that many of these cancers are slow growing and, in older men, may not need treating. Men with a life expectancy of less than 10 years will rarely benefit from radical treatment of early prostate cancer.

Treatment differs depending on whether the cancer is in an early or advanced stage.

In the early stage of development, the prostate may be removed surgically or treated with different forms of radiation. The side effects of potentially curative treatments for localised prostate cancer include a significant risk of impotence or, less commonly, urinary incontinence and bowel problems. Side effects vary for different treatment types. Advanced cancers are treated by hormone therapy, but cannot be cured.

Can I prevent prostate cancer?

The causes of prostate cancer have not been clearly established. There is some evidence that an adjustment of diet to reduce the intake of saturated fats and increase intake of fruit, vegetables and certain trace elements and food components may be beneficial. There is some evidence that a number of substances may reduce the risk of prostate cancer. These include selenium, lycopenes (which can be found in cooked tomatoes, tomato sauces and ketchup) and possibly Vitamin D and E.

Talk to your Doctor!

Traditionally men have not been good about discussing health issues. Please don't let embarrassment or your ego get in the way of acknowledging that your body is susceptible to illness. Being aware may help you survive prostate cancer.

Please remember that this information is of a general nature only and is not intended, nor should it be used as a substitute for proper medical advice from a fully qualified medical practitioner. We urge you to consult a doctor for advice on all matters concerning diagnosis and treatment for prostate cancer.

An Update from DIDs

Dads in Distress (DIDs) is a support group for men who are going through the trauma of divorce and separation. Our group started off in June 2004 at Centacare in Wollongong (to whom we are very grateful), and we have been meeting weekly, every Thursday night between 6pm & 9pm ever since. We are now averaging 10 – 12 people every meeting, and we are looking forward to our 1st anniversary in June.

Our facilitators have participated in a training session in Coffs Harbour, which involved other *DIDs* groups coming from South Queensland, NSW & Victoria. We have also participated in a session in Newcastle & Sydney with these *DIDs* groups.

We are all volunteers and looking back on the past, there is a great feeling that we have made a lot of friends in the process. There has been some local networking with Shellharbour Council, Centacare, Anglicare, the Fatherhood Foundation, together with other local organisations. It is nice to hear of expressions of interest for us to start another branch in Nowra. We feel we are making a difference qualitatively – unfortunately quantitatively it is difficult to say, as information is not readily available. We are all looking forward to making a difference.

For further information DIDs:
Website: www.dadsindistress.asn.au
E-mail: dids@nor.com.au
Ph: 1300853437

Feedback from the Illawarra Family Doctor Awards 2004

Last year the Illawarra Division of General Practice hosted the inaugural Illawarra Family Doctor Awards, where patients could nominate their GP and/or Practice for an award.

Congratulations to Keiraville Surgery for winning the Practice of the Year Award and Dr Jim Turner for winning the GP of the Year Award.

Look out for this year's Family Doctor Awards!!

Here's what some of you had to say about your Doctors and Practices:

"I recently broke my heel bone and Dr Armstrong was fantastic. He made follow-up appointments for me, he even helped me to the car just after he plastered my leg. When he came out to get me for my appointment he would carry my handbag. He was just FANTASTIC."

"Dr Barclay's care and attention to his patients is total and ongoing. When you see him he will take the time to talk to you as long as you need him. He has exceptionally good communication skills which makes one feel totally at ease with him."

"The Thirroul Medical Practice is wonderful. Everyone is just so caring and supportive from the receptionists to the doctors. I cannot speak highly enough of all of them, they are special people."

"Dr Ajam's knowledge and compassion are second to none. He is always available to help when you need things explained or required for medication. I can not say enough good things about Dr Ajam."

Our local DIDs group contact details are:

Ph: 4229 4289

Mobile: 0401854746

Meeting address: Centacare, 25-27 Auburn Street, Wollongong

Meeting times: 6 - 9pm every Thursday

Serenity



Do you suffer from Anxiety Disorders, Phobias or Depression? Do you feel alone & need to talk? You are invited to come along & join our small friendly group. No need to feel alone any longer when we can share our experiences, helping ourselves & each other.

Serenity NSW Inc. is a voluntary, charitable organisation that is holding weekly self help meetings. It's a support group for people suffering anxiety disorders, phobias, depression, with an emphasis on self-help.

Feel free to drop in & only join in if you feel like it. We offer free brochures as well as items for sale such as books, audiotapes & CDs. There is no set charge although we do ask for a contribution at the end.

Meetings are on Thursdays 6:15pm at Thirroul Neighbourhood Centre, 256 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul.

For more details contact Sandy on Ph: 4268 5427
Serenity website: www.serenitynsw.com.au

