



After a Prostate Cancer Diagnosis



Prostate cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the prostate. The prostate is a gland found only in males. It makes some of the fluid that is part of semen. The prostate is below the bladder (the hollow organ where urine is stored) and in front of the rectum (the last part of the intestines). If you have been told you have prostate cancer, you've probably already had a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and a biopsy (a test that takes some tissue to check for cancer). Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells to check for certain proteins and gene changes called biomarkers. You might also have other procedures to find out if the cancer has spread. These tests help your doctor know what type of prostate cancer you have, what grade and stage it is, and what treatment might help.

Treatment for prostate cancer

Prostate cancer doesn't always need to be treated right away. If it's found early and is a type that grows slowly, your doctor might suggest observation, watchful waiting, or active surveillance. This means you will be checked regularly to see if the cancer grows or causes problems. No cancer treatment is given during this time.

If needed, there are many ways to treat prostate cancer, including surgery, radiation, and medicines such as chemo, hormone therapy, targeted drug therapy, or immunotherapy. Treatment depends on the type, stage, and grade of your prostate cancer, results of the tests on the cancer cells, your health, and your personal preferences. Many times, more than one type of treatment is needed.

Some treatments can make you impotent (unable to get an erection) and can affect your bladder control. If you might still want to have children, treatment might also affect your fertility (ability to get someone pregnant), but there are ways to protect this. It's important to talk to your doctor early, before your treatment starts. They can help you understand what to expect.

Be sure to ask:

- What is the goal of treatment?
- What type of prostate cancer do I have?
- What stage and grade is my prostate cancer, and what does that mean?
- What are the biomarker test results?
- What else have you learned from my test results?
- Will I need more tests?
- Do I need to be treated right away?
- If we decide to wait, what happens next?
- Will I need surgery?
- Do I need genetic testing?

What to expect before and during treatment

If treatment is needed, your cancer care team will explain your treatment plan to you. This team may include different doctors, nurses, and other health care workers, depending on the type of treatment you need. For example, if you're having a prostatectomy (surgery to remove the prostate), you will work with a surgeon to know what to expect before, during, and after surgery. If you need other types of treatment, your cancer care team will explain how it is given, help you get ready for it, keep track of how you're doing, and help you with any side effects. You might also get blood tests, scans, or other tests at certain times to see how well your treatment is working.

Not everyone going through treatment for prostate cancer will have the same side effects. For example, the side effects of surgery are different from the side effects of chemo, hormone therapy, targeted drug therapy, immunotherapy, or radiation treatment. And people getting the same treatment might have different side effects.

Be sure to ask:

- What are my treatment options? What do you think is best for me and why?
- Are there any clinical trials for my type of cancer?
- What side effects might I have, and what can I do about them?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- How often will I get treatment? How long will it last?
- Where will I go to get treatment? Can I drive myself?
- Will I be able to keep doing my usual activities, like work and exercise?

- Will treatment affect my sex life? How and for how long? What can I do to help this?
- Do I need to take certain precautions to not get someone pregnant during treatment?

What to expect after treatment

After treatment, ask your cancer doctor for a treatment summary and follow-up plan. This is called a survivorship care plan. Your cancer doctor will work with your family or primary care doctor to help manage side effects from treatment and check your general health. You will have regular tests to check if your cancer has come back, or to check if a new cancer has started in a different part of your body.

For some people, the cancer might not go away completely. They might continue to get treatment, and tests will still be needed to see how well it's working.

You might be faced with changes to your body after treatment. For example, you might have bowel, bladder, or sexual problems. You may also have scars from surgery or skin changes from radiation or chemo. Ask your doctor what to expect and let them know if you have any problems.

If your treatment has caused you to become impotent, talk with your cancer care team about medications that might help, sexual counseling, and getting help with family planning.

People who have had prostate cancer are at risk of having it again or getting certain other types of cancer. Even if you feel fine after finishing treatment, it is important to ask your cancer care team about a regular schedule for follow-up tests to check if your prostate cancer has come back.

Be sure to ask:

- Where do I get a copy of my treatment summary and follow-up plan?
- How often do I need to see my cancer care team?
- When and how should I contact them?
- Will I need tests to see if my cancer has come back, or to check for problems from my treatment?

- Do I need any screening tests, like a colonoscopy, to find other cancers early?
- Are there late or long-term side effects from treatment that I should watch for?
- Do I need to take precautions to not get someone pregnant after treatment?
- Where can I find my medical records after treatment?

Staying healthy

Be sure to tell your doctor or cancer care team if any treatment side effects don't go away or if you have any new symptoms.

There are things you can do to keep yourself healthy during and after treatment. Not smoking can help people with prostate cancer live longer and reduce chances of recurrence. Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, eating well, drinking enough fluids, and avoiding alcohol can also help you stay healthy and lower your risk of getting a new prostate cancer or other cancers.

Dealing with your feelings

Having prostate cancer might make you feel scared, sad, or nervous. It is normal to have these feelings, and there are ways to help you cope with them.

- Don't try to deal with your feelings by yourself. Talk about your feelings, no matter what they are.
- It's OK to feel sad or down once in a while, but let your cancer care team know if you have these feelings for more than a few days.
- If your doctor says it's OK, do things you enjoy like spending time outdoors, going to a movie or sporting event, or going out to dinner.
- Get help with tasks like cooking and cleaning.

You might want to reach out to friends, family, or religious leaders or groups. Counseling can also help. Some people find it helpful to talk with others who've been through the same things. A support group can offer that. Tell your cancer care team how you're feeling. They can help you find the right support.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/prostatecancer or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

