

## What is it and why is it important?



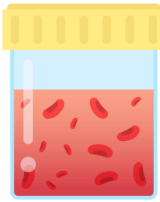



Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men. The prostate gland is located below the bladder. This cancer occurs when cells in the prostate begin to grow uncontrollably.

Some prostate cancers are slow-growing and may not cause serious health issues, while others can be aggressive and spread quickly to other parts of the body. If detected early when it is confined to the gland, the chance of successful treatment is high.

## What are the symptoms of Prostate cancer?

In its early stages, prostate cancer often presents no symptoms. However, as it progresses, symptoms may include:

### Symptoms of Prostate Cancer

	<p><b>Increased frequency or urgency of urination, especially at night</b></p>		<p><b>Incomplete urination with weak urine stream</b></p>
	<p><b>Pain during ejaculation &amp; presence of blood in urine or semen</b></p>		<p><b>Pain in the lower back, hips or chest</b></p>
	<p><b>Unexplained weight loss &amp; persistent fatigue</b></p>		<p><b>Weakness in the legs or feet</b></p>

These symptoms can also be indicative of other conditions; diagnosis with require medical evaluation or screening.

## What are the risk factors for Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer can develop in anyone but, the following factors can increase the likelihood of developing prostate cancer:

- **Age:** Risk increases significantly after age 50. Most cases are diagnosed in **men over 65**.
- **Family history** of the prostate can elevate risk. Men with a father or brother who had prostate cancer are at higher risk.
- Toxins, pesticides and certain **chemical** exposures
- Underlying **chronic infections or prostatitis**
- There is a likely linkage to smoking, obesity and sexually transmitted diseases.

## What are the complications that can arise due to Prostate Cancer?

If left untreated, prostate cancer can lead to severe complications:

- The cancer can spread to bones or lymph nodes, bone metastases can lead to pain and also paralysis of lower limbs when at advanced stages. It can cause significant urinary obstruction or incontinence.
- Erectile dysfunction: Treatment and progression of the disease may impair sexual function, impacting quality of life.

## How is Prostate Cancer diagnosed?

Doctors use a combination of tests to detect prostate cancer and assess its severity to determine the best course of action. Common tests include:

- **Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Blood Test:** This test checks PSA levels in your blood. High levels might suggest prostate cancer but can also be caused by other conditions.
- **Digital Rectal Examination:** In this, a physical examination of the rectum is done to identify any lumps or hard areas.
- **Imaging Tests:** Ultrasound or MRI scans are used to create detailed images.
- A **biopsy** may be done to confirm the diagnosis.

## How is Prostate Cancer treated?

Doctors determine the best treatment for prostate cancer based on factors such as the cancer's stage, aggressiveness, overall health of the patient, and personal preferences. Cancer treatment if advised must start without delay and without interruption. Treatment may include:

- **Active surveillance & watchful waiting:** For slow-growing prostate cancer, regular monitoring with PSA tests, digital rectal exams and biopsies may be recommended instead of immediate treatment. This is suitable for older patients or those with low-risk cancer.
- **Surgery (Prostatectomy):** A radical prostatectomy involves removing the prostate gland, sometimes along with nearby tissues. It is often used for localized cancer and can be done through open, laparoscopic or robotic-assisted surgery.
- **Radiation therapy:** High-energy radiation destroys cancer cells. It can be delivered externally (external beam radiation) or internally through implanted radioactive seeds (brachytherapy). This may be used alone or combined with other treatments.
- **Chemotherapy:** Used for advanced or aggressive prostate cancer, chemotherapy involves drugs that kill or slow cancer cell growth, especially when hormone therapy is no longer effective.
- **Targeted therapy & immunotherapy:** Targeted drugs attack specific genetic changes in cancer cells, while immunotherapy boosts the body's natural defences to fight cancer.
- **Hormone therapy:** Blocks cancer cells from getting the hormones they need to grow. It may include taking medicines or having surgery to remove the testicles.

## How can we prevent Prostate Cancer?

While there is no guaranteed way to prevent prostate cancer, a healthy lifestyle may reduce risk:

- Maintain a healthy **weight** through balanced nutrition and regular **exercise**.
- Eat a **diet** rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats
- Limit **red meat** and dairy consumption.
- Avoid **smoking** and limit **alcohol intake**; both have been linked to various cancers.
- Avoid **sexually transmitted** and underlying chronic **infections** or **prostatitis**
- Regular **screening** & medical checkups – **Men** over **50**, or those with a family history of prostate cancer, should consider regular **PSA tests** for early detection.

Prostate cancers are treatable if detected early. Annual PSA test monitoring is extremely important after the age of 50 years.

## **To Know More:**

- [Preventing Lung Cancer](#)