

This factsheet is one of three. Download the [testicular and penile cancer factsheets](#) at orchid-cancer.org.uk

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common male cancer in the UK, with over 55,000 men diagnosed each year.



Prostate cancer is very treatable and, in many cases, curable.

In fact many men diagnosed with early prostate cancer may not need treatment for several years.

In addition, new tests are being developed which may help identify men who are more likely to need treatment.

Risk factors for prostate cancer

Although prostate cancer is classed as a non-preventable cancer there are some risk factors associated with it. Remember, a risk factor may increase the chance of developing a disease but does not mean that it will happen.

Age

Age is the most common risk factor for developing prostate cancer. The longer a man lives the greater the chance of developing the disease. It is more common in men over the age of 65 and rare below the age of 50.

Ethnicity

Black African and Black Caribbean men are twice as likely to develop prostate cancer. Although much research has been undertaken to try and find out why the risk is greater for black men, at the moment there is no clear answer.

Family history

A man with a first degree relative affected by prostate cancer has more risk of developing the disease and this risk is stronger if a relative was diagnosed under the age of 60.

The risk also increases if there is a family history of genetic breast cancer on the female side of the family caused by certain genes (called BRCA1 and BRCA2).

Men who are worried about their risk of prostate cancer because of any of the above should talk to their GP.

Signs and symptoms of prostate cancer

There is no single symptom to indicate the presence of prostate cancer.

Many men with early prostate cancer may have no symptoms at all. This is because the cancer usually develops in an area of the prostate that does not initially affect urination.

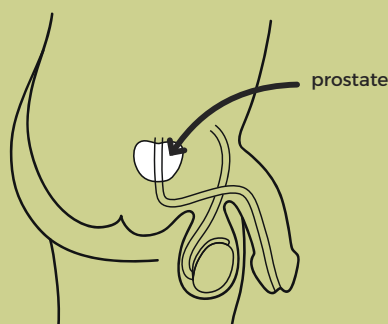
Because the prostate gland surrounds the tube known as the urethra, which passes urine from the bladder, any prostate disease or growth (cancerous or non-cancerous) may eventually cause problems with urination.

What to look out for

Any of the following symptoms should always be checked out:

- **Slow or weak flow of urine.**
- **Urinating more frequently or urgently than usual.**
- **Difficulty starting to urinate.**
- **Pain or burning sensation when urinating.**
- **Difficulty getting or maintaining an erection or pain during ejaculation.**
- **Blood in the urine or semen.**

Remember, the above symptoms can also be caused by other medical conditions not related to cancer, but it is important that you seek expert advice early.



Tests for prostate cancer

The PSA blood test

The most common blood test used to help identify potential prostate cancer is the PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) blood test. PSA is a substance made by the prostate gland and as men get older the level generally increases. An abnormally high level for a particular age can sometimes indicate the presence of prostate cancer.

Unfortunately PSA levels can also be affected by non-cancerous problems such as urinary infection or inflammation of the prostate. Ejaculation and vigorous exercise can also temporarily increase the value of PSA.

A small percentage of men with prostate cancer will have a normal PSA level for their age so it is not a specific test for prostate cancer and may lead to unnecessary worry or investigations. Around two thirds of men with a raised PSA level for their age will not be diagnosed with prostate cancer. All men over the age of 50 in the UK can talk to their GP about their possible risk of prostate cancer and have a PSA blood test.

Digital Rectal Examination

A Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) involves a doctor inserting a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum (back passage) to feel the prostate gland. A cancerous prostate gland may sometimes feel hard and uneven, whereas a normal prostate will usually feel smooth. A DRE may identify a problem (cancerous or non-cancerous), which a PSA blood test on its own may not.

Tips

Avoid ejaculation or vigorous exercise for about 48 hours before having a PSA blood test as both these actions can sometimes increase the normal value giving an inaccurate result. Let your GP know if you are experiencing any abnormalities when passing urine such as a 'burning' or 'stinging' sensation or have noticed any blood in the urine. These could indicate the presence of a possible urinary infection or other medical condition.

What next?

If prostate cancer is suspected then an MRI scan of the prostate will be performed. Any potentially cancerous areas will be identified and biopsies will be taken.

There are over 58,000 new cases of male-specific cancers in the UK each year. Learn more about the signs, symptoms and risk factors at orchid-cancer.org.uk

Call the Orchid Confidential Male Cancer Helpline on 0808 802 0010

or email helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk

Orchid is an award-winning charity dedicated to supporting the needs of those affected by male cancers.* We fund pioneering research, raise awareness and offer a range of support services to anyone affected by penile, testicular or prostate cancer.

* Trans women, non-binary people and some intersex people who were assigned male at birth may also be at risk of these cancers.



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