

As with most cancers, early prostate cancer does not cause noticeable symptoms. If the cancer causes the prostate to swell or if the cancer spreads you will notice -

- a frequent need to urinate.
- difficulty starting or stopping the urinary stream and a burning sensation when urinating or ejaculating.
- a weak or interrupted urinary stream.
- blood in urine or semen.

Eventually, if the condition is left untreated -

- dull pain or stiffness in the pelvis, lower back, or upper thighs.
- loss of weight and appetite, fatigue, nausea, or vomiting.

The prostate is a gland is only found in the male reproductive system. This walnut sized gland helps produce semen, the thick fluid that carries sperm cells. It is located close to the bladder and problems in the prostate ultimately will affect the bladder as well. Prostate function is regulated by testosterone, a male sex hormone produced mainly in the testicles.

This disease is more common in men later in life. There are many men who surprisingly have cancerous cells in their prostate and that do not know it. The cancer may or may not spread. It can also lie dormant for many years, cause no obvious problems and or health threats. If however, it starts to become activated and spreads, it is a dangerous threat.

It is generally fatal if it spreads beyond the prostate gland itself.

A malignant tumour may grow through the prostate gland and spread cancer cells to surrounding tissue, including the rectum and bladder. The cancerous cells may also invade the lymphatic system or bloodstream and then spread to the bones, liver, lungs, and other organs.

Doctors have identified a certain protein that is evident in cancerous prostates. If high levels of this protein are found in cancerous tissue samples, the prostate cancer is unlikely to spread, or metastasise; if there is none of the protein, the cancer is likely to spread.

Cancer that has not spread beyond the prostate gland can usually be cured.

### **Causes**

Prostate cancer affects mainly elderly men. Men with relatives who have prostate cancer are more likely to die of it than others. It is not known for sure what causes this disease but experts agree that diet contributes to the risk. Men who consume great amounts of fat (particularly from red meat and other sources of animal fat) are most likely to develop symptoms of advanced prostate cancer.

Fats can stimulate production of testosterone and other hormones, and testosterone speeds the growth of prostate cancer and can cause dormant prostate cancer cells into activity. Eating meat can also be detrimental to the cancerous cells if cooked at high temperatures, they can contain carcinogens. (See the entry on cancer).

There is no scientifically proven link between prostate cancer and

- an active sex life
- masturbation
- use of alcohol or tobacco
- circumcision
- infertility
- infection of the prostate
- an enlarged prostate gland

### **Traditional Treatments**

Doctors know which prostate cancers are the most in need of treatment. It is advisable to seek several opinions with regard to your condition.

Depending on many factors, your treatment may include a combination of radiation therapy, surgery, and hormone therapy.

The standard operation involves the removal of the prostate and nearby lymph nodes. Speak with your doctor about the implications and side effects that this may entail in your particular case. All prostate cancer patients need to be examined regularly to ensure the problem does not return.

### **At-Home Care**

Some men may experience fatigue, diarrhoea, uncomfortable urination, dry skin, nausea, and other unpleasant side effects. Ask your doctor how best to control these side effects. Rest frequently if you need to, eat light snacks throughout the day rather than having three large meals, and avoid clothes that irritate your skin. (For more information, see Cancer).

### **Prevention**

Eat more fish, poultry, fresh vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy products. Eat less red meat; remove skin from chicken before cooking; and cut down on butter, margarine, and oils.

To avoid carcinogens created when cooking meats, try poaching or roasting, not frying or barbecuing.

### **When to seek further professional advice**

- You have any of the symptoms listed above, or you need help in recognising the prostate cancer signs to enable you to examine yourself.