



# prostate cancer

## identifying and treating the second most common form of cancer for men

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**Prostate cancer is disease in men that results in an increase prostate capable of metastasis to lymph nodes or nearby bones.**

The prostate is an organ that encapsulates the urethra i.e. tube carrying urine from bladder. Therefore an increase in morphology or size of the prostate significantly narrows the urethra thereby making urination difficult.

With the exception of skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in the U.K male population (cancer research UK). 35,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer per year and 73 out of every 1,000 men develop prostate cancer in their life time.

An increase in prostate does not necessarily mean a cancer, the tumour could either be malignant or benign. A malignant growth of the prostate poses a life threatening prognosis, however a benign growth such as Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) can be easily treated.

### What are the Symptoms?

The most striking symptom is difficulty in urinating. It is often associated with a full bladder even though the patient has just urinated. Due to the location of the prostate and close proximity to the urethra, it is also associated with pain whilst urinating and a frequent need to urinate especially at night. Other reported symptoms include a weak and irregular flow of urine.

### Causes of Prostate Cancer?

To date the precise cause is unknown, however some associated factors that increase the likelihood of prostate cancer have been observed. Prevalence is very high in Black ethnic groups thereby implicating a racial inheritance. In addition, genetic predisposition among relatives increases likelihood of disease. Ageing too has been suggested as a possible cause as prevalence is common amongst men over 50 years. Diabetes, high fat and dairy diet has been associated with disease in clinical studies. Conversely, diet such as tomatoes rich in lycopene, an antioxidant and selenium have been suggested to confer a protective effect.

### Tests and Diagnosis?

If a case of prostatic cancer is suspected the initial test is a digital rectal examination to detect the size and surface appearance of the prostate. Increase in size may imply a secondary condition such as BPH rather than cancer. Blood test to check for prostatic proteins in blood too can be used to diagnose disease. Biopsy samples of the prostate too can be taken and sent to the lab for analysis.

### Available Treatment

First treatment initiative is active surveillance to monitor the growth and presence of prostatic proteins in blood. Surgery to remove the prostate completely can be carried out if the tumour has not metastasized. Radiotherapy to destroy the cells is an option if the tumour is cancerous. Hormone therapy to prevent male sex hormones involved in prostate growth can be given, however this does not kill cancerous cells.

In summary, prostate cancer is a disease that can be diagnosed without much difficulty, although treatment approach is often more difficult and takes into consideration several factors based on specialist consultation. Any of the symptoms addressed must be taken seriously to avoid delay in treatment and metastasis.

