



# After a Prostate Cancer Diagnosis

If you have been told you have prostate cancer, you have probably already had a PSA blood test and a prostate biopsy (a test that takes some tissue to check for cancer). When cancer is found on a prostate biopsy, the cancer cells are looked at to find out the grade of the tumor. This is called a Gleason score or Grade Group and is a measure of how quickly the cancer is likely to grow. Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells as well. You might also have had more scans to find out if the cancer has spread. If the cancer hasn't spread, you might have been told you are in a certain risk group for this happening.

Treatments for the different stages, grades, and risk groups of prostate cancer can be very different. Prostate cancer doesn't always need to be treated right away. If it is found early and is a type that grows slowly, your doctor might instead suggest observation, watchful waiting, or active surveillance, meaning you will be checked regularly to see if the cancer grows or causes problems. You can then be treated if this happens.

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. Many times, more than one type of treatment is needed. Certain treatments can also be given if your cancer has spread to the bones. Your treatment choices also depend on the type and stage of your cancer, results of the tests on the cancer cells, health problems you might have, your age, and your personal choices.

It's important to know 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). By talking about this early before your treatment starts, your doctor can help you decide which treatments are best for you and what can be done to protect your fertility.

## Be sure to ask:

- How fast is my prostate cancer likely to grow?
- What stage is my prostate cancer, and what does that mean?
- What else have you learned about my prostate cancer from my test results?
- Will I need more tests?
- Do I need to be treated right away?
- If we decide to wait, what will happen next?
- If we decide on treatment, which ones do you think are best?
- What are the likely side effects from treatment?
- Will the treatment affect my fertility? Is there anything that can help with this?

## What to expect during treatment

If you decide on treatment, 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) or radiation therapy, your cancer team will help you know what to expect before, during, and after treatment. If you need other types of treatment, your doctor or 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, x-rays, or scans at certain times to see how well the 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 treatments. And people getting the same treatment might have different side effects. It's also important to know if you need to use birth control during treatment.

### Be sure to ask:

- What are my treatment options? What do you think is best for me and why?
- What is the goal of treatment?
- 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, and how long will it last?
- Where will I go to get treatment, and can I drive myself?
- Will I be able to keep doing my usual activities, like work, exercise, and having sex?
- Do I need to use birth control during treatment?

## What to expect after treatment

After treatment, your cancer care team will help you deal with any side effects you might still have. You will also 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.

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

You might also have a hard time coping with changes to your body after treatment. For example, you might have bowel, bladder, or sexual problems, or you may have scars from surgery or skin changes from radiation or chemo. If this is a concern, talk to your cancer care team about what options are available to help you cope.

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

Even if you've finished treatment and may feel fine, it is important to ask your cancer care team about a regular schedule for follow-up tests to check if prostate cancer has come back.

### Be sure to ask:

- How often do I need to see my cancer care team?
- Do I need a follow-up plan after treatment?
- Will I need tests to see if the cancer has come back, or to check for problems from my treatment?
- Do I need any screening tests, like a colonoscopy, to find other common cancers early?
- Are there late or long-term side effects from treatment I should watch for?
- Do I need to use birth control after treatment?
- When and how should I contact my cancer care team?
- Where can I find my medical records after treatment?

## Staying healthy

There are things you can do to keep yourself healthy during and after treatment for prostate cancer. Eating well, being active, getting to and staying at a healthy weight, not smoking, and avoiding alcohol can help you.

Some of these things might also help lower your risk of getting a new prostate cancer or other cancers.

Remember to get screened for other kinds of cancers and continue getting checked for other health problems. Talk to your doctor about the screening and testing plan that's right for you.

## Dealing with feelings

Having prostate cancer might make you feel scared, sad, or nervous. You might also have a hard time coping with changes to your sexual function, bladder control, or other changes in your body after treatment. 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 all 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.
- Do things you enjoy, like going to a movie, out to dinner, spending time outdoors, or to a sporting event, if your doctor says it's OK.
- Get help with tasks like cooking and cleaning.

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

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit us online at **[cancer.org/prostatecancer](https://cancer.org/prostatecancer)**.  
We're here when you need us.



[cancer.org](https://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

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