

PROSTATE CANCER

Factsheet

Each year approximately 47,000 men in the UK are diagnosed with prostate cancer; it is now the most common form of cancer amongst men. The Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) is working with supporters and partners nationally, as well as in Masonic provinces, to increase awareness and understanding about prostate cancer, empowering men and their families to make informed decisions about effective testing and treatment. For more information visit; www.mcf.org.uk/resources/prostate-cancer

About prostate cancer

Sometimes prostate cancer grows slowly. It may not cause any problems and not all cancers will need to be treated. Other prostate cancers grow faster and need to be treated to stop them spreading. There are three types of prostate cancer:

- **Early (localised) prostate cancer;**
when the cancer cells have not spread into the surrounding tissues and remain within the prostate gland.
- **Locally advanced prostate cancer;**
when the cancer cells have started to spread into the tissues around the prostate gland.
- **Advanced prostate cancer;**
when the cancer cells have spread to other parts of the body.

Signs and symptoms

Most men with early prostate cancer don't have any signs or symptoms. If a man does experience changes in urination it is important to remember that it is more likely to be a sign of a very common non-cancerous problem called an enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hyperplasia) or other health problem. However, it is always a good idea to get it checked out with a visit to the GP.

Changes to look out for include:

- difficulty starting to urinate or emptying your bladder
- a weak flow when you urinate
- a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly

- dribbling urine after finishing urinating
- needing to urinate more often, especially at night
- a sudden urge to urinate – you may sometimes leak before you get to the toilet.
- back pain, hip pain or pelvis pain
- problems getting or keeping an erection
- blood in the urine or semen
- unexplained weight loss.

Screening

Screening means testing people for early stages of a disease before they have any symptoms. There is currently no national screening programme for prostate cancer.

PSA testing

The PSA test is a blood test that measures the amount of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in the blood. PSA is a protein produced by normal cells in the prostate and also by prostate cancer cells. It is normal to have a small amount of PSA in the blood, and the amount rises slightly with age and as the prostate gets bigger. A raised PSA level may suggest there is a problem with the prostate, but not necessarily cancer.

There's currently no screening programme for prostate cancer in the UK. This is because it has not been proved that the benefits would outweigh the risks.

Instead of a national screening programme, there is an informed choice programme, called prostate cancer risk management, for healthy men aged 50 or over who can ask their GP about PSA testing. It aims to give men good information on the pros and cons of a PSA test.

If you're aged 50 or over and decide to have your PSA levels tested after talking to a GP, they can arrange for it to be carried out free on the NHS. If results show you have a raised level of PSA, the GP may suggest further tests.¹

Diagnosis

There is no single test to diagnose prostate cancer. When you visit your GP there are some initial tests they can do. Most commonly they may carry out a physical examination which involves feeling the prostate gland, also known as a digital rectal examination (DRE). To do this the GP will put a gloved finger into the back passage to check for abnormal signs, such as a lumpy or hard prostate. This examination will usually only take a few minutes. The GP might suggest a urine test and a PSA test to inform the diagnosis.

¹ (Source: NHS)

Further tests and biopsies

The rectal examination and PSA tests may lead the GP to suggest when there is a need for further tests. If so, they may make an appointment for the individual to see a specialist at the hospital. Where the GP suspects it could be prostate cancer, the specialist will usually be seen within two weeks and they may suggest the need for a prostate biopsy. Many hospitals organise a multi-parametric MRI (mpMRI) scan before a biopsy. This can help to see if there is any cancer inside the prostate and how quickly any cancer is likely to grow. If the mpMRI scan shows no signs of cancer inside the prostate then there may be no need for a biopsy.

There are two main types of biopsy. A trans-rectal ultrasound scan (TRUS) biopsy involves passing a small ultrasound probe into the rectum and using a thin needle to obtain small samples of tissue from the prostate. A template (transperineal) biopsy involves inserting a needle into the prostate through the skin between the testicles and the back passage (perineum). Other tests may include:

- **An MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging) scan – this uses magnetism to build up a picture of the body.
- **A bone scan** – this uses small doses of radiation to show abnormal areas of bone.
- **A CT scan** – this uses x-rays to build up a three-dimensional picture of the inside of the body.

Staging and grading

The test results will tell doctors more about the size of the tumour and if it has spread outside of the prostate. This is known as the 'staging' and 'grading' of the cancer. Knowing the stage and risk group of the cancer helps the individual and their doctor decide on the best treatment. Further information on staging and grading can be found at; www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/prostate-cancer/staging-and-grading-of-prostate-cancer#335206

Coping with cancer

There will be some practical issues anyone diagnosed with prostate cancer might need to consider. For example, having cancer can affect a person's housing and financial situation, and they may be entitled to certain financial support through the state. There are a range of specialist organisations that can provide emotional support.

Find out more

The following list is a small selection of the wide range of organisations which provide support and publish information prostate cancer. *The MCF does not endorse or recommend any of the organisations listed.*

- **Cancer Research UK**
Cancer research and awareness charity aiming to reduce number of deaths by cancer.
www.cancerresearchuk.org

- **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Helps those with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support.

www.macmillan.org.uk

- **NHS Choices**

Thousands of freely available articles, videos, tools and apps to help make the best choices about health and wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk

- **Prostate Cancer UK**

Improves the care and welfare of those affected by prostate cancer, investment in research, and raises public and political awareness.

www.prostatecanceruk.org

Other information

Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides grants and support for Freemasons and their family members. A wide range of help is available for daily living costs; health, care and wellbeing; and education-related costs for children and young people.

Call 0800 035 60 90 or visit www.mcf.org.uk

MCF Factsheets

You may also be interested in the following factsheets:

- **A good death**
- **Respite care**
- **Intermediate care**
- **Debt**
- **Bereavement**
- **Power of Attorney**

Scan the QR code below or visit mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources



Whilst every care has been taken to verify accuracy, the information in this factsheet is for guidance only.

Last updated / reviewed: November 2023