

KEY POINTS:

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) and the second greatest cause of cancer deaths in men¹.

In 2006, it is estimated that 18,700 new cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed in Australia¹. Tragically, in 2005 more than 2,900 Australian men died from prostate cancer¹.

In the early stages, there are few symptoms of prostate cancer. However, if detected early, prostate cancer is often treatable and curable. This is why men aged 50 and over, or 40 if there is a family history of prostate cancer, should not wait for symptoms; they should talk to their doctor about prostate cancer – it's a simple step that could save their life.

WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer is an abnormal growth of cells in the prostate that form a lump (tumour). In time, without treatment, it may spread to other organs, particularly the bones and lymph nodes, which can be life threatening. Generally at the early and potentially curable stage, prostate cancer does not have obvious symptoms. This makes it different from other benign prostate disorders, which may result in urinary symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PROSTATE CANCER?

In the early stages of prostate cancer, there may be no symptoms at all. As prostate cancer develops, symptoms can include the need to urinate frequently, particularly at night, sudden urges to urinate, difficulty in starting urine flow, a slow, interrupted flow and dribbling afterwards, pain during urination or blood in the urine or semen.

NOTE: It is important to note that these symptoms are not always signs of prostate cancer. They can also be symptoms of other common and non-life threatening prostate disorders. Men who experience these symptoms should see their doctor immediately, to determine the cause and best treatment.

WHAT TESTING METHODS ARE AVAILABLE?

There is currently no population based screening for prostate cancer and this leads to confusion amongst men and their doctors. There are issues related to testing and treatment which should be discussed prior to making a decision whether to be tested. For more information go to: www.prostate.org.au/testing-for-prostate-cancer.php

Two simple tests can be done by a doctor:

- The Digital Rectal Examination (DRE). The doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to feel the prostate gland. This may detect hard lumps in the prostate before symptoms occur
- The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test. This test measures the amount of PSA in the blood. PSA blood test is not a cancer specific diagnostic test however it will alert doctors to abnormal growth in the prostate

A combination of both a DRE and PSA blood test is recommended. These tests should be considered as part of a general male health check annually from 50 years of age or 40 if there is a family history of prostate cancer. If either the DRE or PSA tests are abnormal, the doctor may conduct a second series of tests or refer to a Urologist, who may recommend a biopsy. The biopsy is a definitive way of diagnosing prostate cancer and will determine the stage (how far the cancer has spread) and grade (how rapidly it is likely to spread). This information is used to determine the risk the cancer poses to the man's health and life expectancy.

NOTE: Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) research indicates that most men who have had the DRE test said it was a simple, painless exercise.

WHO SHOULD BE AWARE OF PROSTATE CANCER, AND WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?

It is recommended that men aged 50 and over should talk to their doctor about prostate cancer and if they decide to be tested, to do so annually. If there is a family history of prostate cancer; men should talk to their doctor from the age of 40.

WHAT IS THE OVERALL RISK OF DEVELOPING PROSTATE CANCER?

A man has a 1 in 5 risk of developing prostate cancer by the age of 85¹. A man with a first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer (brother or father) has at least twice the risk. Men in rural and regional Australia have a 21% higher prostate cancer mortality rate than men in capital cities².

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PROSTATE CANCER:

Talk to your doctor, or contact the PCFA by phoning toll free, 1 800 22 00 99 or visit www.prostate.org.au

¹ AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) and AACR (Australasian Association of Cancer Registries) 2007. Cancer in Australia: an overview, 2006. Cancer series no. 37. Cat. No. CAN 32.

² Michael D Coory and Peter D Baade. Medical Journal of Australia 2005; 182 (3): 112-115. Urban-rural differences in prostate cancer mortality, radical prostatectomy and prostate-specific antigen testing in Australia.

ABOUT THE PROSTATE CANCER FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA

PCFA is the peak national body for prostate cancer in Australia. It is dedicated to providing support, raising awareness and funding research.

PROVIDING SUPPORT,
INFORMATION AND
ADVOCACY TO MEN
AND THEIR FAMILIES
AFFECTED BY PROSTATE
CANCER VIA:

- 84 support groups nationally
- Prostate cancer information brochures available through doctors surgeries, pharmacies and via other health professionals
- Free call information number 1800 22 00 99 for men and women
- www.prostate.org.au provides detailed information regarding many issues related to prostate cancer.

RAISING AWARENESS
ABOUT PROSTATE
CANCER VIA:

- National Men's Health Ambassador Speakers Program – men and women from around the country who are available to speak about prostate cancer to community groups, corporations, industry and other organisations
- Prostate Health Information Evenings – leading experts and those who have been impacted by this disease speak at free public seminars
- Men's Health Promotion Forums held in urban and regional Australian cities provide information on prostate and other men's health issues
- Working with community events that support the work of PCFA such as MOverner and Father's Day 5 to promote awareness
- Information for doctors and other health professionals, communicating the latest information and increasing general knowledge of prostate cancer
- Media campaigns aimed at increasing general knowledge about the disease
- Celebrity supporters who regularly assist PCFA to promote awareness of this disease include, Angry Anderson, Guy Leech, Wayne Gardner and Normie Rowe

FUNDING RESEARCH
INTO THE CAUSE,
DIAGNOSIS,
PREVENTION AND
TREATMENT OF
PROSTATE CANCER:

A number of research projects around the country are funded each year through Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia Research Grants. These grants will ultimately reduce the impact of prostate cancer on the Australian community by:

- Encouraging young investigators to undertake research into prostate cancer
- Stimulating senior scientists, not working in the field of prostate cancer, to present innovative proposals
- Encouraging rigorous proposals that will provide direct, tangible benefits to prostate cancer patients
- Funding equipment purchases which will facilitate innovative research in prostate cancer

PCFA receives limited funding from government, therefore relying on the generosity of individuals, the community and important partnerships with corporate Australia, to carry out its essential work.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS:

If you would like to conduct an interview with a representative of PCFA, or require further information, please call 1800 22 00 99 or visit www.prostate.org.au.

1800 22 00 99
www.prostate.org.au

PO Box 1332 Lane Cove NSW 1595
51-53 Chandos Street St Leonards NSW 2065
T 02 9438 7000 F 02 9438 7099 E enquiries@prostate.org.au

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