

## Prostate cancer

This information is about how prostate cancer is diagnosed and treated.

Any words that are underlined are explained in the word list at the end. The word list also includes the pronunciation of the words in English.

If you have any questions about this information, ask your doctor or nurse at the hospital where you are having treatment.

You can also call Macmillan Cancer Support on freephone **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm. We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your own language. When you call us, please tell us in English which language you need (say “xxxxx”).

There is more cancer information in [language] at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://macmillan.org.uk/translations)

### This information is about:

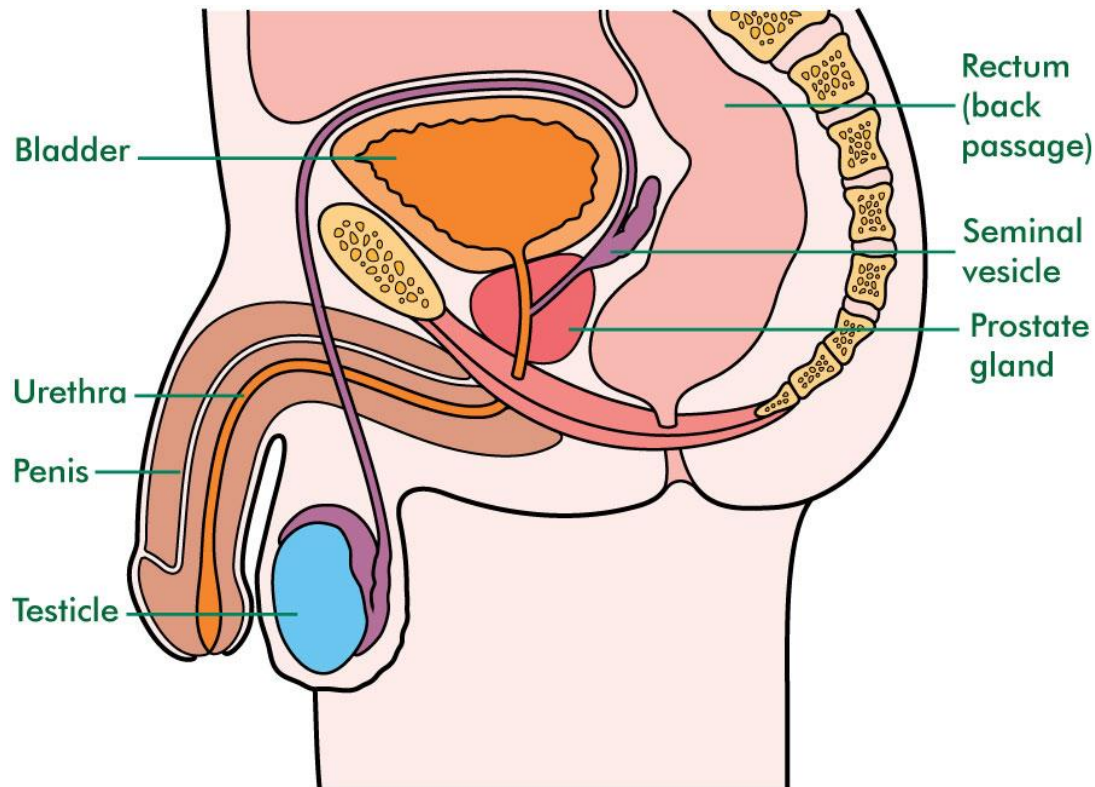
- The prostate
- Prostate cancer
- How treatment is planned
- Talking to your healthcare team
- Questions to ask about treatment
- Treatments for prostate cancer
  - Active surveillance
  - Watchful waiting
  - Surgery
  - High-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU)
  - Radiotherapy
  - Hormonal therapy
  - Chemotherapy
- Coping with side effects
- Controlling symptoms of advance prostate cancer
- Follow up
- Your feelings
- How Macmillan can help you
- Word list
- More information in [language]
- References and thanks

## The prostate

All men have a small gland called the prostate. It is about the size of a walnut and it gets bigger with age.

The prostate surrounds the first part of the tube (urethra) that carries urine from the bladder to the penis.

[ILLUSTRATION OF MALE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS]



The prostate makes a white fluid that mixes with sperm from the testicles to make semen. Semen contains sperm cells.

The male sex hormone testosterone controls how the prostate works. It is made in the testicles. Testosterone is responsible for your sex drive, getting an erection and muscle development.

The prostate also makes a protein called prostate-specific antigen (PSA). This helps to make semen more liquid.

PSA can be measured in a blood test. When it is used with other tests the PSA test can help doctors to diagnose prostate cancer.

## Prostate cancer

All parts of the body are made up of tiny cells. Prostate cancer happens when the cells in the prostate grow in an uncontrolled way. They eventually form a lump called a tumour.

Some prostate cancers grow slowly but other prostate cancers grow faster.

Sometimes prostate cancer cells spread outside the prostate to other parts of the body.

Prostate cancer is not infectious and cannot be passed on to other people.

### Who gets prostate cancer

The risk of prostate cancer increases as men get older. It is more common in men over 70. It is much less common in men under 50.

We do not know what causes it. But certain risk factors may increase the chances of getting it. Black men have a much higher risk of developing prostate cancer and usually get it at a younger age.

### Stages and grades of prostate cancer

- The stage of a cancer means how big it is and if it has spread.
- The grade of a cancer is how quickly the cancer may grow.

Prostate cancer is often divided into these stages:

- early (localised) prostate cancer – the cancer cells are only inside the prostate
- locally advanced prostate cancer – the cancer has spread into the tissues around the prostate
- advanced (metastatic) prostate cancer – the cancer has spread to another part of the body, usually to the bones.

## How treatment is planned

Your healthcare team will meet to plan the best treatment for you. Your doctor or nurse will talk to you about this plan. Your treatment will depend on factors, such as:

- the stage and grade of the cancer
- your age and general health
- the benefits of treatment and possible side effects
- what you think about the available treatments.

## Talking to your healthcare team

It is important to talk about the treatments you could have with your cancer doctor or nurse. You may also want to talk to a relative or a friend. Sometimes two treatments may work equally well in treating the cancer. You may be asked to decide on the best treatment for you. You will need to think about different things, such as side effects, before you decide. Your doctor or nurse can help you with this.

After talking with you, your doctor will ask you to sign a form to show that you understand and agree to the treatment. This is called a consent form. You will not have any treatment unless you have agreed to it.

It is a good idea to take someone with you who can speak both [language] and English. Your hospital can arrange an interpreter for you. If you need an interpreter, it is important to tell your nurse before your appointment.

## Questions to ask about your treatment

- What does my diagnosis mean?
- What is the stage and grade of the cancer?
- What treatments are available?
- What are the benefits, risks and side effects of each treatment?
- How will the treatment affect my daily life?
- Who can I talk to about how I am feeling?

We have a factsheet in [language] called **If you are diagnosed with cancer**, which gives more information. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/translations](http://macmillan.org.uk/translations)

## Treatments for prostate cancer

Early prostate cancer	Locally advanced prostate cancer	Advanced prostate cancer
Active surveillance	<u>Radiotherapy</u> to the prostate	<u>Hormonal therapy</u>
Watchful waiting	Hormonal therapy	<u>Chemotherapy</u>
An operation (surgery) to remove the prostate (prostatectomy)	Watchful waiting	Radiotherapy to improve symptoms, such as pain
Radiotherapy to the prostate	Occasionally, an operation (surgery) to remove the prostate (prostatectomy)	An operation (surgery) to improve symptoms of advanced cancer
Hormonal therapy		Symptom control

### Active surveillance

Active surveillance means you can avoid or delay treatment and its side effects. You will only have treatment if the cancer is growing. Active surveillance is only suitable for some men with early prostate cancer that is growing slowly.

Your doctors will see you regularly. They check your PSA (prostate specific antigen) and monitor you with tests and scans to check the cancer is not growing. This may include MRI scans and possibly having a biopsy.

If the cancer starts to grow more quickly, your doctors will recommend surgery or radiotherapy to try to cure the cancer.

### Watchful waiting

Some men decide with their specialists to wait before starting treatment. This is called watchful waiting. You may have this because you are not well enough to have radiotherapy or surgery. Or it may be because you have chosen not to have radiotherapy or surgery.

You see your doctor, usually your GP, regularly.

If there is no sign the cancer is growing more quickly, it is safe to continue with watchful waiting. If you develop symptoms your doctor will usually talk to you about having hormonal therapy.

## **Surgery**

Surgery to remove the whole of the prostate is called a prostatectomy. There are different ways this can be done. This operation aims to get rid of all of the cancer cells. It is usually only done when the cancer has not spread outside the prostate gland. Your doctor will discuss the operation they think is best for you and its possible side effects. Prostate surgery is done in specialist centres so you may have to travel to the hospital.

### **Prostatectomy**

The surgeon makes a cut in the tummy area (abdomen). The whole prostate is removed through the cut. Sometimes they remove the prostate through a cut in the area between the scrotum and the back passage.

### **Laparoscopic prostatectomy (keyhole surgery)**

In this type of operation your surgeon makes four or five small cuts (about 1cm each) in your tummy area (abdomen). They remove the prostate using special instruments that are put through these small cuts.

### **Robotic-assisted laparoscopic prostatectomy**

This is when the surgeon controls a machine with robotic arms. It can move very precisely.

### **Side effects**

The main possible side effects are

- problems with urine leaking (urinary incontinence)
- problems getting or keeping erections (erectile dysfunction).

After the operation you will no longer be able to have children. If you want children, it may be possible to store sperm before your operation.

### **Other types of surgery**

Occasionally, men with advanced prostate cancer have an operation to remove the part of the testicles that make the hormone testosterone. This is called an orchidectomy. But most men choose to have drugs to reduce testosterone levels rather than this type of surgery.

## **High-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU)**

Some early prostate cancers may be treated with HIFU treatment. It can treat different areas of cancer in the prostate or only a small area.

The doctor puts a probe, which produces a high-energy beam of ultrasound, into your back passage (rectum). It delivers heat to the affected area and destroys the cancer cells.

## Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy uses high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells. There are different ways of having radiotherapy. It is often given from outside the body by a machine (external radiotherapy). You usually have radiotherapy as an outpatient. This means you come to hospital for treatment and then go home again that day.

Some men with early or locally advanced prostate cancer have radiotherapy that is given from inside the body (internal radiotherapy). Doctors call this **brachytherapy**. There are 2 ways of giving it:

- small radioactive seeds are placed in the prostate and stay there permanently
- thin tubes placed in the prostate are attached to a machine that sends radioactive material into the tubes for a set time.

Men with advanced prostate cancer can have radiotherapy if the cancer is causing symptoms, such as pain in the bones.

We have a factsheet in [language] about radiotherapy. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/translations](http://macmillan.org.uk/translations)

### Side effects

- The skin in the treated area may become red or darker, if you have dark skin.
- You may need to pass urine more often or urgently.
- You may get diarrhoea.
- You may develop problems getting an erection 2 to 5 years after radiotherapy.

## Hormonal therapy

The hormone testosterone makes prostate cancer grow. Hormonal therapies either reduce testosterone levels in the body or block testosterone. They can be given as tablets or injections.

You will usually have hormonal therapy before or after radiotherapy. It makes radiotherapy work better. Some men may have it for 2 to 3 years after radiotherapy to reduce the risk of the cancer coming back.

For some men hormonal therapy may be the main treatment.

If you are having watchful waiting and the cancer is causing symptoms you usually start hormonal therapy.

Hormonal therapy is the main treatment for men with advanced prostate cancer. It can:

- shrink the cancer
- slow its growth
- reduce the symptoms of cancer.

## Side effects

These can include:

- hot flushes and sweats
- sexual problems
- tiredness
- weight gain
- bone thinning.

## Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy uses anti-cancer drugs to destroy cancer cells. It is only used to treat prostate cancer that has spread to other parts of the body. It can be given either with or after hormonal therapy.

A nurse will give you the chemotherapy drugs into a vein (intravenously). You can have this in the chemotherapy day clinic.

Chemotherapy drugs can cause side effects that make you feel unwell.

Different drugs can cause different side effects. These include:

- being more likely to get an infection
- feeling tired
- feeling sick or being sick
- a sore mouth
- hair loss.

Your doctor can talk to you about the side effects you may have and how to manage them. Most side effects can be controlled with drugs. Most side effects go away when chemotherapy is over.

We have a factsheet in [language] about chemotherapy. This includes information on some of the side effects you may have. Visit [www.macmillan.org.uk/translations](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

## Coping with treatment side effects

Treatments for prostate cancer can cause some difficult and upsetting side effects. Your doctor will explain the side effects you are likely to have. Not everyone gets all these side effects. It depends on the treatment you have.

There are different ways these can be managed. Always talk to your doctor or nurse about side effects.



**Sexual problems** – you may not want to have sex or find it hard to get or keep an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction (ED). Your doctor or nurse can give you advice. There are drugs and other treatments that can help with ED.

**Bladder problems** – you may need to pass urine more often or have some urine leaking (incontinence). There are different ways of coping with this problem. Your doctor or nurse can give you advice. They can refer you to a specialist in managing incontinence.

**Hot flushes and sweats** – they may reduce as your body gets used to treatment. They usually stop completely 3 to 6 months after treatment with hormonal therapy finishes.

**Breast swelling or tenderness** – certain hormonal therapy drugs may cause this. Some men have low-dose radiotherapy to their chest before treatment to prevent this. A hormonal drug called tamoxifen can also be given to reduce breast swelling.

**Tiredness and difficulty sleeping** – hot flushes may make sleeping difficult. Regular physical activity can help to reduce tiredness.

**Mood changes** – talking to someone close to you or a counsellor may help.

**Weight gain (especially around the middle) and loss of muscle strength** – regular physical activity and a healthy, balanced diet can help to manage this.

**Bone thinning (osteoporosis)** – this is more likely with long-term hormonal treatment. Regular weight-bearing exercises such as walking, dancing, hiking or gentle weight-lifting can help keep your bones healthy.

## **Controlling symptoms of advanced prostate cancer**

If the cancer is advanced, there are lots of ways to control any symptoms you may have. Your doctor can give you different drugs or medicines to help with symptoms. Always tell your doctor if symptoms do not improve.

### **Macmillan toilet card**

If you need to use a toilet urgently when you are out, you can carry a free Macmillan toilet card. You can show this in places such as shops, offices and cafes. We hope it helps you get access to a toilet but it may not work everywhere.

You can get one by calling our Macmillan Support Line on 0808 808 00 00. Or, you can order it on our website at [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk)

You can also use disabled toilets. These are sometimes locked. You can buy a key from some health charities and some local councils.

## **Follow up**

After your treatment has finished, you will have regular check-ups and tests. These may continue for several years but will happen less often over time.

## **Your feelings**

You may feel overwhelmed when you are told you have cancer and have many different emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel. There are many ways to cope with your emotions. Talking to a close friend or relative may help. Your doctor or nurse can help too.

## How Macmillan can help you

Macmillan is here to help you and your family. You can get support from:

- **The Macmillan Support Line (0808 808 00 00).** We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your language. Just tell us, in English, the language you want to use. We can answer medical questions, give you information about financial support, or talk to you about your feelings. The phone line is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.
- **The Macmillan website ([macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)).** Our site has lots of English information about cancer and living with cancer. There is more information in other languages at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](http://macmillan.org.uk/translations)
- **Information and support services.** At an information and support service, you can talk to a cancer support specialist and get written information. Find your nearest centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](http://macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us. Your hospital might have a centre.
- **Local support groups** – At a support group you can talk to other people affected by cancer. Find a group near you at [macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](http://macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups) or call us.
- **Macmillan Online Community** – You can also talk to other people affected by cancer online at [macmillan.org.uk/community](http://macmillan.org.uk/community)

## Word list

Word (target language)	In English	How to say in English (transliteration of English word)	Meaning
	Cells		The tiny building blocks that make up the organs and tissues of our body.
	Chemotherapy		A cancer treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer <u>cells</u> .
	Consent		Giving permission for something to happen or agreeing to do something.
	Diarrhoea		When you have soft or watery poo. You might need the toilet more than usual or very urgently. You may also have tummy pain.
	Hormonal therapy		A cancer treatment that works by affecting <u>hormones</u> in the body.
	Hormone		A substance made by the body that controls how organs work. There are different types of hormones.
	Protein		A substance that helps our body to grow, function and repair itself.
	Radiotherapy		A cancer treatment that uses high-energy rays, such as x-rays, to kill cancer.
	Tumour		A group of <u>cells</u> that are growing in an abnormal way. The abnormal <u>cells</u> keep multiplying and form a lump.

## More information in [language]

We have information in [language] about these topics:

<p><b>Types of cancer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Breast cancer</li><li>• Large bowel cancer</li><li>• Lung cancer</li><li>• Prostate cancer</li></ul> <p><b>Treatments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chemotherapy</li><li>• Radiotherapy</li><li>• Surgery</li></ul>	<p><b>Coping with cancer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you're diagnosed with cancer – A quick guide</li><li>• Claiming benefits</li><li>• Eating problems and cancer</li><li>• End of life</li><li>• Financial support – benefits</li><li>• Financial support – help with costs</li><li>• Healthy eating</li><li>• Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer</li><li>• Side effects of cancer treatment</li><li>• What you can do to help yourself</li></ul>
---	--

To see this information, go to [macmillan.org.uk/translations](http://macmillan.org.uk/translations)

### Speak to us in [language]

You can call Macmillan free on **0808 808 00 00** and speak to us in [language] through an interpreter. You can talk to us about your worries and medical questions. Just say [language] in English when you call (say “xxxxx”).

We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.

## References and thanks

This information has been written and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been translated into [language] by a translation company.

The information included is based on the Macmillan booklets **Understanding early prostate cancer**, **Understanding locally advanced prostate cancer** and **Understanding advanced prostate cancer**. We can send you a copies, but the full booklets are only available in English.

This information has been reviewed by relevant experts and approved by our Senior Medical Editors, Dr Jim Barber, Consultant Clinical Oncologist and Dr Lisa Pickering, Consultant Medical Oncologist.

With thanks to: Dr Alison Birtle, Consultant Clinical Oncologist; Jane Booker, Macmillan Urology Nurse Specialist; Mr Christian Brown, Consultant Urological Surgeon; Sharon Clovis, Prostate Nurse Specialist; Gill Davis, Specialist UrologyNurse; Louise Dawson, Macmillan Uro-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist; Ben Hearnden, Prostate Nurse Specialist; Mr Graham Hollins, Consultant Urological Surgeon; Dr Duncan McLaren, Consultant Clinical Oncologist; and Professor Jonathan Waxman, Professor of Oncology.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this information.

All our information is based on the best evidence available. For more information about the sources we use, please contact us at **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk**

MAC15138\_Language



Content reviewed: October 2018

Next planned review: 2021

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate but it should not be relied upon to reflect the current state of medical research, which is constantly changing. If you are concerned about your health, you should consult your doctor. Macmillan cannot accept liability for any loss or damage resulting from any inaccuracy in this information or third-party information such as information on websites to which we link.

© Macmillan Cancer Support 2018. Registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). Registered office 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ.