

# ASCO ANSWERS

## PROSTATE CANCER

### WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer is a disease in which normal cells in the prostate gland begin to change, grow without control, and no longer die, forming a mass of cells called a tumor. Some prostate cancers grow very slowly and may not cause symptoms or problems for years. Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in men in the United States.

### WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE PROSTATE?

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located behind the base of the penis, in front of the rectum, and below the bladder. It surrounds the urethra, the tube-like channel that carries urine and semen through the penis. The prostate produces seminal fluid, the liquid in semen that protects, supports, and helps transport sperm.

### WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing the cancer, such as where it is located, if or where it has spread, and if it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. There are four stages for prostate cancer. Illustrations for these stages are available at [www.cancer.net/prostate](http://www.cancer.net/prostate).

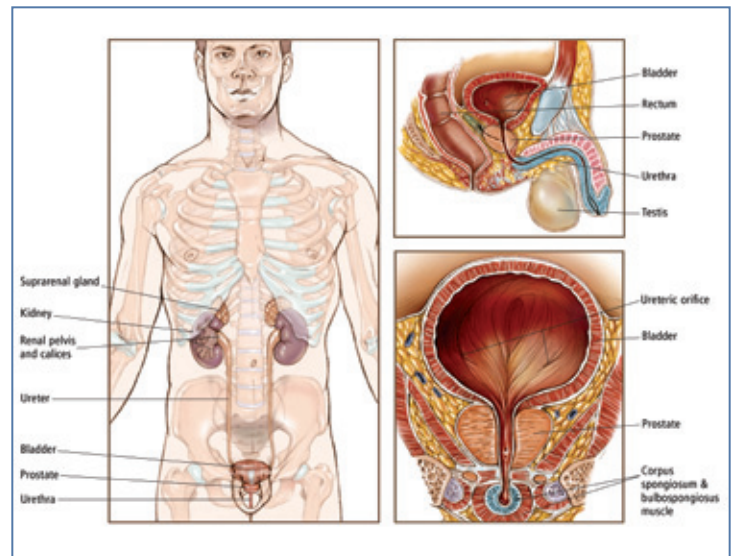
### HOW IS PROSTATE CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of prostate cancer depends on the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the man's overall health. For early-stage cancer, your doctor may recommend active surveillance (watchful waiting), and start treatment only when the cancer shows signs of spreading, causes pain, or blocks the urinary tract.

Surgery to remove the prostate and nearby lymph nodes is usually done before the tumor has spread outside the prostate. Radiation therapy and surgery are similarly effective at treating prostate cancer that has not spread. Hormone therapy is often used to treat prostate cancer that has grown after surgery and radiation therapy, or to shrink large tumors before radiation therapy. Chemotherapy is commonly used for advanced prostate cancer that is resistant to hormone therapy. When making treatment decisions, men may also consider a clinical trial; talk with your doctor about all treatment options. The side effects of prostate cancer treatment, including incontinence and sexual dysfunction, can often be prevented or managed with the help of your health care team.

### HOW CAN I COPE WITH PROSTATE CANCER?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your doctor are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, becoming organized, and considering a second opinion are other steps. Take care of yourself during this time. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.



*Find additional cancer information at [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net).*

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your health care. Consider asking the following questions of your doctors:

- What are the risks and benefits of screening for prostate cancer?
- What type of prostate cancer do I have?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What stage and grade is the prostate cancer?
- Has the cancer spread to my lymph nodes or anywhere else? Would you explain my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- Which treatment, or combination of treatments, do you recommend? Why?
- How will this treatment benefit me?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- If I'm worried about the cost related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to produce children?
- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at [www.cancer.net/prostate](http://www.cancer.net/prostate).

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*Information in ASCO's patient education materials is not intended as medical advice or as a substitute for the treating doctor's own professional judgment; nor does it imply ASCO endorsement of any product, service, or company.*

*ASCO believes that all treatment decisions should be made between patients and their doctors.*

**For more information, visit ASCO's patient website,  
[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net), or call 888-651-3038.**

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## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Benign:**

A tumor that is not cancerous

### **Biopsy:**

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

### **Chemotherapy:**

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

### **Lymph node:**

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

### **Malignant:**

A tumor that is cancerous

### **Metastasis:**

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

### **Oncologist:**

A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer

### **Prognosis:**

Chance of recovery

### **Prostatectomy:**

The removal of the entire prostate gland

### **Prostate-specific antigen (PSA):**

A tumor marker (a type of protein released by prostate tissue) that may be found at higher-than-normal levels in men with prostate cancer or another prostate condition

### **Radiation therapy:**

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

### **Tumor:**

A mass of tissue that requires a biopsy