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Prostate Cancer - Overview [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 01/2016

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about this disease and the parts of the body it may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net's Guide to Prostate Cancer. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

About the prostate

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located behind the base of a man's 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's main function is to make seminal fluid, the liquid in semen that protects, supports, and helps transport sperm.

About prostate cancer

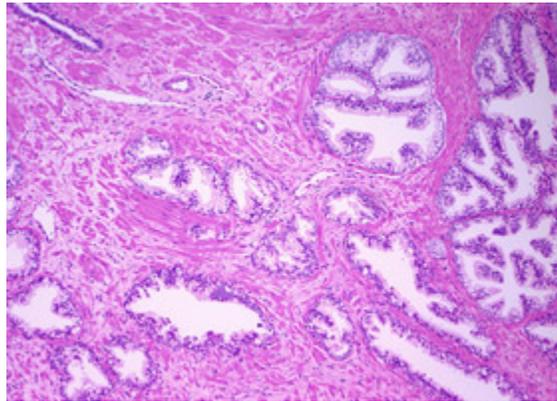
Cancer begins when healthy cells in the prostate change and grow uncontrollably, forming a mass called a tumor. A tumor can be cancerous or benign. A cancerous tumor is malignant, meaning it can grow and spread to other parts of the body. A benign tumor means the tumor can grow but will not spread.

Prostate cancer is somewhat unusual, compared with other types of cancer, because many prostate tumors do not spread to other parts of the body. Some prostate cancers grow very slowly and may not cause symptoms or problems for years. Even when prostate cancer has spread to other parts of the body, it often can be successfully managed, allowing men with prostate cancer to live with good health for several years. However, if the cancer cannot be well controlled with treatment, it can cause pain, fatigue, and sometimes, death.

About prostate specific antigen (PSA)

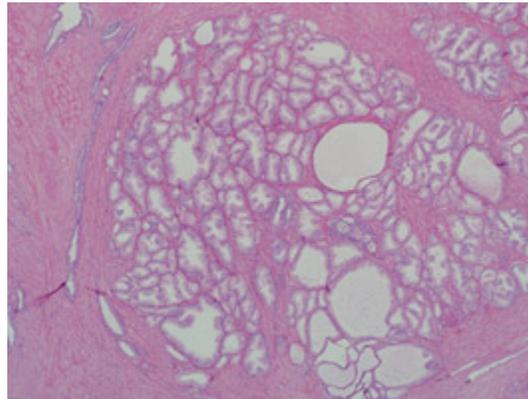
Prostate specific antigen (PSA) is a protein produced by cells in the prostate gland. PSA is detected using a blood test. Higher-than-normal levels of PSA are found in men with prostate cancer, as well as other non-cancerous prostate conditions. Those conditions include benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which is an enlarged prostate, and prostatitis, which is inflammation or infection of the prostate. See the [Screening](#) [3] section for more information.

More than 95% of prostate cancers are a type called adenocarcinomas. A rare type of prostate cancer known as neuroendocrine cancer or small cell anaplastic cancer tends to spread earlier but usually does not make PSA. Read more about [neuroendocrine tumors](#) [4].



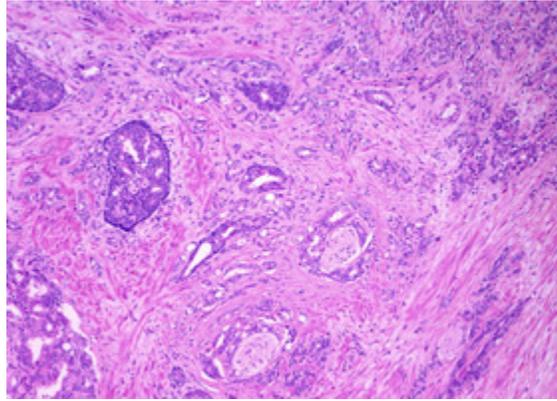
Normal prostate tissue

[Click to Enlarge](#)



Benign prostatic hypertrophy

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Prostate adenocarcinoma

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Looking for More of an Overview?

If you would like additional introductory information, explore these related items. Please note these links will take you to other sections on Cancer.Net:

- **[ASCO Answers Fact Sheet \[5\]](#)**: Read a one-page fact sheet (available as a PDF) that offers an easy-to-print introduction to this type of cancer.
- **[ASCO Answers Guide: \[6\]](#)** This 44-page booklet (available as a PDF) helps newly diagnosed patients better understand their disease and treatment options, as well as keep track of the specifics of their individual cancer care plan.
- **[Cancer.Net Patient Education Video \[7\]](#)**: View a short video led by an ASCO expert in this type of cancer that provides basic information and areas of research
- **Cancer.Net En Español**: Read about [prostate cancer in Spanish \[8\]](#) or read a one-page [ASCO Answers Fact Sheet \[9\]](#) in Spanish. Infórmase sobre [cáncer de próstata en español \[8\]](#) o una hoja informativa de una página, [Respuestas sobre el cáncer \[9\]](#).

The [next section in this guide is Statistics \[10\]](#), and it helps explain how many men are diagnosed with this disease and general survival rates. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

- [1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/prostate-cancer/overview>
- [2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>
- [3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/34546>
- [4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31394>
- [5] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_prostate.pdf
- [6] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_guide_prostate.pdf
- [7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/29051>
- [8] <http://www.cancer.net/es/node/31360>
- [9] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_prostate_esp.pdf
- [10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19563>