



# Understanding Prostate Cancer

In incidence and mortality, prostate cancer is to men what breast cancer is to women. Yet, the disease is not as widely discussed. The City of West Hollywood and its Human Resources Division, in cooperation with the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF), are pleased to provide this important information on prostate cancer. In keeping with our mission to foster a healthy community, we encourage you to share the following information with the men in your life.

## THE FACTS

- 1 in 6 American men will be diagnosed with prostate in their lifetime; 1 in 3 with a family history. The risk is increased if the cancer was diagnosed in a family member less than 55 years of age or if it affected three or more family members
- More than 218,000 cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed in the U.S. last year
- More than 32,000 American men died from prostate cancer last year—a death every 16.4 minutes
- African-American men are 1.6 times more likely to be diagnosed and 1.4 times more likely to die from the disease
- More than 2 million American men and their families are currently living with prostate cancer, and 16 million worldwide
- A man is 35% more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than a woman is to be diagnosed with breast cancer
- A non-smoking man is more likely to develop prostate cancer than he is to develop colon, bladder, melanoma, lymphoma, and kidney cancers combined
- 300,000 new cases of prostate cancer per year are projected in the U.S. by 2015

## About Prostate Cancer

Contrary to popular belief, prostate cancer is not just an old man's disease. It can affect men in their 30's, 40's and 50's. Some prostate cancers begin to form in the prostate when men are in their 20's. Another misconception is that it is a slow-growing cancer that should not be a cause of concern. With 24 sub-types of prostate cancer recently discovered by PCF-funded researchers at the University of Michigan, we now know that some prostate cancers are non-life-threatening, while others can be very aggressive.

We are nearing a day when we will be able to identify the aggressiveness of a patient's prostate cancer when it is first diagnosed, and treat it accordingly. This will enable medical professionals to cure more and overtreat less. It will also provide patients with better data when selecting a treatment plan. Today, however, patients can still make informed decisions with a better understanding of the disease.

## How is it diagnosed?

Usually, the first step in diagnosing prostate cancer is a simple blood screening called the **PSA** (prostate-specific antigen) test. This test is like a "smoke alarm" for the prostate. Elevated PSA levels can indicate that there is a problem with the prostate. In most cases, it may be **prostatitis**, a common infection, or an indication that the patient has an **enlarged prostate**, a condition that typically occurs as a man ages. In some cases, it might indicate the need for a needle biopsy to determine if cancer is present. The PSA test is typically done in combination with the **DRE** (digital rectal exam). During this exam, a physician inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to feel for any abnormalities. The procedure is completed in just a few seconds and with little discomfort.

## When should a man get a PSA test?

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer affecting men in the United States. When caught early, it has a five-year survival rate greater than 95%. Establishing a baseline PSA score at age 40 can help doctors better interpret future PSA scores. The Prostate Cancer Foundation urges all men over 40 to speak with their doctors and make a prostate health plan based on their health and family history. The PSA blood test and DRE are often routine elements of a man's annual physical exam.

## What if a biopsy is positive?

If prostate biopsy results are positive for cancer, your physician will review test results and discuss the specifics including what percentage, or how many sectors, of the prostate are cancerous. This information, combined with your [Gleason](#) score, will guide physicians as they assess the potential aggressiveness of your cancer. Physicians also assist patients and their doctors in determining which course of treatment is most appropriate for each individual patient.

## What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Not everyone experiences symptoms of prostate cancer. Many times, signs of prostate cancer are first detected by a doctor during a routine check-up. Some men, however, will experience changes in urinary or sexual function that might indicate the presence of prostate cancer. Symptoms include: the need to urinate frequently, difficulty stopping or starting urination, weak or interrupted flow of urination, painful or burning urination, difficulty having an erection, painful ejaculation, blood in the urine or semen, frequent pain or stiffness in the lower backs, hips or upper thighs.

### What Can You Do?

- **Eat right and exercise**
- **Know your family history and share it with family members**
- **Do your research; be an active member on your healthcare team**
- **If you are over 40 years-old, find a physician you trust and talk to them about developing a proactive prostate care plan**
- **Talk to your peers and friends; make prostate cancer something to talk about**
- **If you are given a diagnosis of prostate cancer, do not panic—detected early, it is highly treatable. Even in cases of advanced disease, there are more effective treatment options than ever before**

## More information on Prostate Cancer

Up to date information on prostate cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment can be found online at [pcf.org](http://pcf.org). There you can also find downloadable information guides, links to patient forums and cancer blogs. The Prostate Cancer foundation can also be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pcf.org](http://www.facebook.com/pcf.org) and Twitter at [www.twitter.com/pcfnews](http://www.twitter.com/pcfnews).

Since its founding, PCF has funded more than 1,500 advanced research projects at nearly 200 institutions in 12 countries across the world. Complete information on PCF-supported research can also be found at [pcf.org](http://pcf.org).

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*This fact sheet was created for the City of West Hollywood as a courtesy of the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF). The Los-Angeles-based Prostate Cancer Foundation is the leading philanthropic organization funding and accelerating research globally.*