

Dear Friend:

Few things in life are more frightening, confusing or devastating than a diagnosis of cancer. The word alone is enough to send shivers down the spine of most people, especially when it strikes close to home, either in yourself or a loved one. Yet the outlook for people with cancer is often better than ever before.

In this brochure, I provide important information about prostate cancer, including symptoms, screening tests and treatment, along with pertinent websites and phone numbers where you can gather additional reference material as well.

As is often the case with chronic illness, education is the key to early detection and the fight against cancer. Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in American men. Modern methods of detection and treatment mean that many prostate cancers are now found earlier and can be treated more effectively. According to the most recent data, for all men with prostate cancer, the relative 5-year survival rate is nearly 100 percent.

I hope you find this information helpful. As always, if I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Roxanne J. Persaud
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BASIC FACTS ABOUT PROSTATE CANCER: WHAT EVERY MAN SHOULD KNOW

*Courtesy of
Senator Roxanne J. Persaud*





NEW YORK STATE SENATE

The Prostate Gland

About as big as a chestnut, the prostate is a male sex gland. It surrounds the urethra, which empties urine from the bladder.

Defining Prostate Cancer

Cancer is the name used to describe a number of diseases that are caused by the abnormal growth of cells. Prostate cancer starts in the prostate gland and grows and spreads at different rates. While some tumors grow quickly, others grow so slowly that symptoms are not produced for decades.

Risk Factors

While all men are at risk for prostate cancer, the factors listed below can increase the odds of a man getting this disease.

Age: almost all prostate cancer patients are at least 50 years old, and over 80 percent are over 65 years old.

Family History: having a father or brother with prostate cancer doubles a man's risk of developing the disease.

Race: African-Americans have the highest incidence rate in the world.

Diet & Nutrition: some studies show that a high-fat diet may increase the chance of getting prostate cancer.

Early Detection

The American Cancer Society recommends that men have a chance to make an informed decision with their health care provider about whether to be screened for prostate cancer. Two methods of detecting the cancer are listed below.

- A prostate specific antigen or PSA test is a blood test that measures a protein produced by the prostate. High PSA levels may indicate infection, enlargement or a tumor.
- A digital rectal examination or DRE is a quick, painless test performed by your physician to determine if there are any lumps, or enlargement, thickening or other irregularities of the prostate.

Symptoms

It is important to note that early stage prostate cancer very often causes NO warning signs or symptoms. However, symptoms that may indicate prostate cancer include:

- weak or interrupted urine flow;
- inability to urinate or difficulty in starting or stopping urination;
- need to urinate frequently, especially at night;
- blood in the urine;
- painful or burning urination; and
- continuing pain in lower back, pelvis, or upper thighs.

Diagnosis

If a man has symptoms or test results that suggest prostate cancer, his doctor may order other tests, including urinalysis, blood work, x-rays, ultrasound or a biopsy.

If a man receives a positive diagnosis for cancer, he should seek a second opinion from a specialist, such as a urologist, surgeon, radiologist or oncologist. Most health insurance plans in New York State, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover second opinions.

Stages

Newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer stages are usually categorized into one of four stages.

Very Early: cancer cannot be felt during a digital exam and is confined to the prostate. The diagnosis is usually made when surgery is done for another reason, or through abnormal PSA test results.

Localized: cancer is confined to the prostate gland, but large enough to be detected during a digital examination.

Regionalized: tumors are present in tissues that surround the prostate gland.

Advanced: tumors have spread to bones or lymph nodes in the pelvic area.

Treatment

The treatment you choose should take into account several different factors. For a complete list and more information regarding treatment options, please visit the American Cancer Society online at www.cancer.org. Listed below are just a few of the options available; it is important you discuss with your health care professional which is best for you.

Watchful waiting: may be advised for those whose early stage prostate cancer appears to be growing slowly. It may also be advised when, because of age or health, the possible side effects of treatment may outweigh the benefits.

Surgery

Radiation therapy: uses high-energy rays or particles to kill cancer cells.

Hormonal therapy: is used to reduce levels of the male hormones, androgens, to try and slow the growth of cancer cells.

Prognosis

Over the last 50 years, survival rates for prostate cancer have increased, making the outlook positive. It is important to get checked annually if you are a male age 50 or older (or sooner if you are deemed at risk). If you have loved ones who may be at risk, please share this information with them. Early detection could add years to your life or to the lives of your family members and friends.

For More Information

American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org or 1-800-ACS-2345

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate> or 800-CDC-INFO

New York State Health Department:
<http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/cancer/prostate/>