



PROSTATE CANCER

Everybody knows someone with it.

Prostate Cancer

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- Many men can be treated and live a normal lifespan and good lifestyle if the condition is diagnosed early
- Treatment can consist of simply monitoring the patient
- There are also combination treatments

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More than 3000 men die from prostate cancer in Australia every year. One out of every eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetimes. The chance of being diagnosed with prostate cancer is doubled if a man's father or brother has been diagnosed. Of course the key to treatment is early diagnosis and that can be assisted by requesting a blood test called prostate specific antigen (PSA) and prostate examination (digital rectal examination or DRE) where a gloved finger is inserted in the bottom to check for abnormalities. The PSA test measures a substance which is made in the prostate and is found in the blood stream. Not all rises in PSA are because of cancer. Some may be from infection or other reasons. If there is suspicion, the diagnosis may then be made by taking a sample with a fine needle called a biopsy. That enables the type of cancer to be identified in order to plan appropriate management.

The good news is that many men can be treated and live a normal lifespan and good lifestyle if the condition is diagnosed early and appropriate management carried out. After the diagnosis of prostate cancer the treatment should be tailored for the individual. That is, to enable the man to live for a long time and a good time without the side effects of treatment being worse than the disease.

Treatment can consist of simply monitoring the patient in the non aggressive form of the disease so that action can be taken if the situation changes and warrants it.

Alternatively, treatment may be surgery where the prostate is completely removed using a cut on the lower abdomen or with laparoscopic instruments or robot assisted laparoscopic instruments where the surgeon uses instruments attached to mechanical arms inserted through small openings 1-2 cm wide and viewed on a screen. Other forms of treatment may be cryotherapy (freezing), external beam radiotherapy and also brachytherapy where small rice grain sized seeds are inserted in the prostate to emit radiation directly in the prostate gland. There are also combination treatments.

Sometimes it is necessary to lower a man's male hormone (testosterone) level because most prostate cancers need that to grow. These days this can be done with tablets or injections given 4-6 monthly.

Side effects of treatment can worry some men but all men should have full control of urination and hope to be able to achieve satisfactory erections for intercourse.



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