prostate cancer

what you need to know
how to spot the signs
how you can support us
what is prostate cancer?

The Prostate

The prostate is a male sex gland located underneath the bladder. It is about the size of a walnut and fits around the tube (the urethra) which carries urine out of the bladder. The prostate produces a thick fluid that forms part of the semen.

Prostate Cancer

Almost 25,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year. It has now overtaken lung cancer to become the UK’s most commonly diagnosed cancer in men.

Prostate cancer usually affects older men - 95% of all patients are aged between 45 and 80.

Causes

We do know that the risk of prostate cancer is increased if there is a family history of the disease. But in most cases, we simply do not know what causes it to occur. That’s why it is vital that we conduct further research and that more men are aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease.
One of the problems related to prostate cancer is that, in its early stages, it often does not cause symptoms. When they do occur they may include any of the following problems:

- Difficulty in urinating.
- Delays in urinating.
- Stopping and starting urinating.
- A weak stream of urine.
- Urinating more often than usual.
- Pain while urinating.
- Blood in the urine.
- Pain or stiffness in the lower back and hips.

These symptoms can also be caused by other conditions that are less serious than prostate cancer; such as a non-cancerous enlarged prostate gland or a kidney infection.

**Action**

However, it is vital that you do go and see your doctor as soon as possible if you are suffering from any of these symptoms so that the cause can be diagnosed and any relevant treatment administered.
testing and screening

Early diagnosis of prostate cancer is extremely important for successful treatment. Once the cancer has become advanced and has spread, it becomes much more difficult to cure.

Prostate cancer tests:

- **Rectal examination**: your doctor can actually feel the size of the prostate gland. However, an enlarged prostate does not necessarily indicate prostate cancer.

- **PSA Blood Test**: tests the level of 'Prostate Specific Antigen' in the blood. A high reading suggests prostate cancer but could be caused by other conditions.

- **Biopsy**: a tiny sample of tissue from the prostate is taken using a probe and the tissue analysed.

- **Ultrasound**: a small probe is inserted into the back passage and a scan taken to show the exact size of the prostate.

- **Bone Scan**: can be taken to determine whether there is any cancer that has spread to the bones near the prostate.

None of these tests are individually conclusive indicators of prostate cancer. Further research is urgently needed to find a more comprehensive test - as an early diagnosis is so important to successful treatment.
Some prostate cancers are so slow-growing that no treatment is needed. Instead, a policy of 'watchful waiting' is employed to closely monitor the condition. When more active treatment is required, there are currently four main options:

- **Surgery**: the entire prostate gland is removed in an operation called a 'prostatectomy'.

- **Radiotherapy**: high energy rays are used to destroy the cancer cells.

- **Hormone treatment**: drugs can be used to lower the level of testosterone in the blood, which has the effect of slowing or stopping the growth of the cancerous tumour. However, some prostate tumours develop the ability to grow without testosterone.

- **Brachytherapy**: a treatment where radioactive 'seeds' are implanted directly into the tumour.

All of these treatments can cause side-effects and carry the long-term risk of impotence.

At The Institute of Cancer Research we are making significant advances in the fight against prostate cancer. But one man dies every hour in the UK from this disease. More research is urgently required and we need your support. Please fill in the attached form and join the fight against male cancers.