

## **PROSTATE CANCER: KNOW THE BASIC FACTS**

### **WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER?**

Prostate cancer is a cancer that starts in the prostate gland. The prostate gland is about the size of a walnut or golf ball. It is found under the urinary bladder and in front of the rectum. The prostate gland produces some of the fluids in semen.

### **HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE DIAGNOSED WITH OR DIE FROM PROSTATE CANCER?**

Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that 192,280 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed and 27,360 men will die from it in 2009 in the United States. In Maryland, it is expected that 3,580 men will be diagnosed of prostate cancer and 550 will die from it in 2009.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PROSTATE CANCER?**

Prostate cancer does not usually produce symptoms in its early stages, so a man can look healthy, feel fine, and not know there may be a problem. If signs and symptoms are present, they may include:

- blood in the urine;
- the need to urinate frequently, especially at night;
- weak or interrupted urine flow;
- pain or a burning feeling while urinating;
- inability to urinate; and
- regular pain in the lower back, pelvis, or upper thighs.

### **WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR PROSTATE CANCER?**

According to Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six men (16%) will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in his lifetime. The main risk factor for prostate cancer is age, that is, the chance of getting prostate cancer increases with age.

Approximately 63% of men with prostate cancer are diagnosed in men over the age of 65 years. Family history of prostate cancer is another risk factor-- 5-10% of men with prostate cancer have a family history of prostate cancer.

Other risk factors are race and family history. African American men have the highest rate of prostate cancer. Compared to African American men, prostate cancer is **less** common among men who are white, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native. It is important to note that having a risk factor does not mean that the man will definitely develop prostate cancer. In fact, most men with risk factors do not get prostate cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, African-American men are more likely to be diagnosed at an advanced stage of prostate cancer and they are twice as likely to die from it as white men. There is some evidence that shows that the risk of dying prostate cancer may increase with obesity and with eating a diet high in animal fat.

Medical researchers do not know all the causes of prostate cancer or how to prevent it. However, avoiding all forms of tobacco, achieving and maintaining a health weight, exercising for at least 30 minutes on five or more days of the week, and eating at least five servings of vegetables and fruits daily are important for overall health.

### **HOW DO YOU DETECT PROSTATE CANCER?**

Prostate cancer screening is done with a blood test that looks at the level of prostate specific antigen (PSA) and with a digital rectal exam (DRE) where your doctor feels the prostate gland with a finger.

Men are encouraged to learn about prostate cancer, their personal risks for prostate cancer, options for screening, and the potential benefits and complications of diagnosis and treatment. It is very important that men communicate with their doctors to make an informed decision about whether to be screened.

### **DO YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

National Cancer Institute (English and Spanish language lines)

Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)