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ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

MAY 2009

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: PROSTATE CANCER

It is estimated that 1 in 6 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.

In 2008, more than 186,000 men in the U.S. were diagnosed with prostate cancer according to the American Cancer Foundation. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer related death among men after lung cancer. Other than skin cancer, in American men, prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer. It is estimated that 1 in 6 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. However, only 1 in 35 men will die from prostate cancer. If detected early, the five-year survival rate (percentage of patients who live at least five years after

being diagnosed with prostate cancer) is nearly 100 percent. Modern technology and more powerful treatments mean that prostate cancer can be found early and treated more effectively.

What Exactly is the Prostate?

The prostate is a male reproductive gland about the size of a walnut that is located in front of the rectum and underneath the urinary bladder. Only men have a prostate gland. The job of the prostate is to produce some of the fluid that will protect and nourish a man's sperm cells. Prostate cancer

occurs when cancerous cells form in the tissue of the prostate.

Symptoms of Prostate Cancer

During the early stage of prostate cancer there are often no signs or symptoms. This is why screening tests for prostate cancer are so important. Early detection improves the chances of survival.

Symptoms of Advanced Prostate Cancer

Please keep in mind these symptoms may be caused by other diseases or disorders, such as benign prostatic hypertrophy (a **non-cancerous** condition that causes the prostate to enlarge and slow or block the flow of urine) or prostatitis (a **non-cancerous** condition that causes the prostate gland to become swollen and inflamed).

Symptoms include:

- A need to urinate frequently, especially at night
- Difficulty getting a stream of urine started or stopped
- Weak urine flow or urine flow that starts and then stops
- Painful or burning urination
- Difficulty in having an erection
- Frequent stiffness or pain in lower back, hips, ribs, spine, or upper thighs
- Painful ejaculation
- Blood in urine or semen



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Diets low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables may lower the risk of developing prostate cancer.

Risk Factors for Prostate Cancer

- **AGE:** The chances of developing prostate cancer increases the older a man gets. It is estimated that 1 in 55 American men between the ages of 40 and 59 will be diagnosed with prostate cancer.
- **FAMILY HISTORY:** The risk of developing prostate cancer is higher if your father, brother, or son had prostate cancer.
- **RACE:** African American men have the highest risk of developing prostate cancer.
- **DIET:** Research studies reveal that prostate cancer is more common in men with a diet high in fat. Diets low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables may lower the risk of developing the disease.

The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit the intake of red meats, particularly meats high in fat or processed (e.g., lunchmeat, hotdogs or bologna).
- Eat 5 or more servings or 2 ½ cups of fruits or vegetables a day.
- Choose foods high in fiber and lycopenes (e.g., tomatoes, pink grapefruits, watermelon). Lycopenes are antioxidants that help lower the risk of developing prostate cancer and other chronic diseases.

Screening for Prostate Cancer:

The purpose of screening for prostate cancer is to detect the cancer in its earliest stages when the rate for survival is highest. During a routine office visit your doctor will ask about a man's personal and family medical history and perform a physical exam. One or both of the following medical tests may be performed:

- **DIGITAL RECTAL EXAM:** The prostate is physically checked by your doctor for size, lumps, and hard areas.
- **BLOOD TEST:** The blood is checked for prostate-specific antigen. High PSA levels may be cause for concern.

*The American Cancer Society asserts that a digital rectal exam and blood test can only detect a problem with the prostate. A biopsy (tissue samples from the prostate are examined under a microscope for cancerous cells) is required to diag-



nose prostate cancer. Therefore it is important that all men discuss with their doctor the potential benefits and limitations of early prostate screening tests.

This discussion should take place between a doctor and men who are age 50 or older, have an average risk of prostate cancer, and are expected to live to reach age 60 or older. This discussion with your doctor should take place at age 40 for men who are in a high risk group for developing prostate cancer (African American men, those with a family history of prostate cancer, or those who have several male relatives who developed prostate cancer at an early age).

USEFUL RESOURCES:

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service: 1-800-4-CANCER

National Cancer Institute's LiveHelp Service:
<https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp>

Markey Cancer Center, University of Kentucky: 1-866-340-4488

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