

# Prostate Cancer

The prostate is a small gland about the size of a walnut. It forms part of the male reproductive system. The prostate sits below the bladder, in front of the rectum and close to nerves, blood vessels and muscles that control erections and bladder function. The prostate produces fluid that helps to feed and protect sperm. This fluid forms part of semen.

Prostate cancer begins when abnormal cells in the prostate gland start growing in an uncontrolled way. In some cases, prostate cancer grows more slowly than other types of cancer. Sometimes prostate cancer can grow and spread quickly, so it is important to see your doctor about any symptoms or unusual test results promptly.

## Queensland<sup>1,2</sup>

- 4281 Queenslanders were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2017, making it the most commonly occurring cancer in males<sup>3</sup>. Prostate cancer made up 25 per cent of all male cancers.
- 647 males died from prostate cancer in 2017, making it the second most common cause of male cancer deaths after lung cancer.
- Prostate cancer was responsible for 12 per cent of all male cancer deaths.
- The approximate lifetime risk of a Queensland male to be diagnosed with prostate cancer before the age of 85 is one in five.
- The approximate lifetime risk for a Queensland male to die of prostate cancer before the age of 85 is one in 29.
- In 2017, 71 per cent of all prostate cancer deaths occurred after 74 years of age.
- On average, males diagnosed with prostate cancer were 95 per cent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population.

## Trends in Queensland<sup>2</sup>

- Between 2007 and 2017, prostate cancer diagnosis rates have significantly decreased by 2.6 per cent per year. This followed an increase in rates by 5.5 per cent per year from 1998-2006, a short period of 8.9 per cent of decrease in rates per year from 1994-1997 and a 10.6 per cent increase in rates per year from 1988-1993. Prior to this, the diagnosis rates were stable from 1982-1987.

- Prostate cancer death rates decreased by 4.1 per cent per year between 2011 and 2016. This followed a decrease in rates by 1.7 per cent per year between 1993 and 2010. Prior to this, the rates increased by 3.6 per cent per year between 1982 and 1992.

## Australia<sup>4</sup>

- Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in Australia<sup>3</sup>.
- After lung cancer, prostate cancer causes more deaths among Australian men than any other kind of cancer.
- Prostate cancer is rare before the age of 45.
- At least 83 per cent of prostate cancers occur in men aged 60 years and over, and 97 per cent of deaths from prostate cancer occur in men aged 60 years or over.
- On average, Australian men diagnosed with prostate cancer were 95 per cent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population.

## Symptoms<sup>5,6</sup>

Early prostate cancer rarely causes symptoms. However, when symptoms do occur, they can often be similar to the symptoms experienced by people with benign prostate hyperplasia (BPH), which is non-cancerous. BPH is when a normal prostate gland may grow larger as you age.

Symptoms of advanced prostate cancer may include:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Frequent or sudden need to urinate
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Pain in the bones, especially the lower back, hips or pelvis.

## Diagnosis

There is no single, simple test to detect prostate cancer. Two commonly used tests are the PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test conducted by your GP and a digital rectal examination carried out by a urologist. These tests, used separately or together, only show changes in the prostate. They do not diagnose prostate cancer. If either test shows an abnormality, you will be referred to a urologist for further evaluation.

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An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan uses a powerful magnet and radio waves to build up detailed pictures of the inside of the body. Your doctor may suggest this scan to help work out if a biopsy is needed.

## Risk factors<sup>7</sup>

The causes of prostate cancer are unknown, but factors that increase the risk include:

- Older age – prostate cancer is most commonly diagnosed in men aged 60-79.
- Family history of prostate cancer - if your father or brother has had prostate cancer before the age of 60, your risk will be twice that of others.
- Strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer - particularly BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations.

## Reducing cancer risk

The causes of prostate cancer are not fully understood and there are no known ways to prevent it. Cancer Council Queensland recommends that to reduce your overall cancer risk you; quit smoking, maintain a healthy body weight, eat a healthy diet, be physically active, stay SunSmart, limit alcohol, participate in cancer screening programs (if eligible) and report unusual changes to your body to your doctor immediately.

1. Queensland Cancer Register, 2020. Unpublished data (1982-2017).
2. Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2020. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland ([qcsol.cancerqld.org.au](https://www.cancerqld.org.au)). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Register (1982-2017; released July 2020).
3. Excluding keratinocyte or non-melanoma skin cancers such as Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)
4. Cancer data in Australia (web report), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Last updated 02 Jun 2020 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/cancer-data-in-australia/contents/summary>.
5. Baade PD, Steginga SK, Aitken JF. Current Status of prostate cancer in Queensland: 1982 to 2002. Brisbane, Viertel Centre for Research in Cancer Control, Queensland Cancer Fund. 2005.
6. Cancer Council Australia. Early detection of prostate cancer.
7. Prostate cancer in men. (<https://cancerqld.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/prostate-cancer/>)

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## Information and support

### Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a loved one can leave you with many questions. We want to help you find the answers. Call Cancer Council's 13 11 20 Information and Support line to talk with one of the team.

Our team can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support. We can also refer you to Cancer Council Queensland's support programs and services.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays).

### Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects you, your carer or loved ones with a peer support volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. You can be matched with a Cancer Connect volunteer based on cancer diagnosis, treatment, family or work issues.

### Cancer Counselling Service

Living with a cancer diagnosis, or supporting someone along the way, is rarely easy. Talking things through with a counsellor or psychologist can help you manage your cancer related concerns.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is available for anyone distressed by cancer at any stage. We deliver counselling via telephone and video, with face to face appointments available in some regional offices. Our team includes nurse counsellors and psychologists trained and experienced in helping people affected by cancer.

## Further information and support



13 11 20



Email



Webchat