

# Health Spotlight: Prostate cancer

- An estimated 24,500 cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in Australia in 2023<sup>1</sup>
- Prostate cancer represented 27% of all cancer diagnoses in men in 2022<sup>2</sup>
- The average age of diagnosis for prostate cancer in 2023 is 70 years old<sup>1</sup>
- Around 3,500 Australian men died of prostate cancer in 2022<sup>3</sup>

## What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer develops because of abnormal cells that form and mutate in the prostate gland. It most commonly occurs in men aged 60 to 80<sup>3</sup>, and around one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer by the time they are 85<sup>1</sup>.

There are three stages of prostate cancer that are commonly referred to – localised (or early) prostate cancer, where cancer cells have grown but do not spread beyond the prostate; locally advanced prostate cancer, where cells have spread to nearby parts of the body or glands; and metastatic prostate cancer, where cancer cells have spread to parts of the body that are further away<sup>1</sup>.

## Warning signs

Early prostate cancer often does not cause symptoms. With advanced prostate cancer, symptoms may include frequent urination, pain while urinating or blood in your urine.

If the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, it may cause more generalised symptoms such as unexplained fatigue or weight loss.<sup>1</sup>

A number of tests can help in the detection of prostate cancer. The most common is a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, which measures the level of PSA in your blood. Elevated PSA may indicate a problem in the prostate. However, some men with prostate cancer don't display elevated PSA, and the test may also detect cancerous cells that are growing slow and don't require immediate treatment.<sup>4</sup>

If the results of your PSA test are concerning, your doctor may recommend repeat testing and, if results are still a concern, may refer you to a urologist for further tests such as a digital rectal examination, MRI or biopsy.

## Risk factors

Age is the number one risk factor in developing prostate cancer, as well as any family history of the disease. Your risk of developing prostate cancer is higher if you have any relatives that were previously diagnosed at a young age.

If you have either the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation, you may also have an elevated risk of developing prostate cancer<sup>5</sup>. A family history of other types of cancer, such as breast or ovarian cancer, may also increase your risk.<sup>6</sup>

## Ways to reduce your risk

- Speak to your doctor about prostate cancer screening if you are older, have a family history of the disease and are experiencing any symptoms
- Maintain a healthy diet low in red meat, sugar and processed foods, which have been associated with a higher risk of cancer<sup>7</sup>
- Knowing your risk factors for developing prostate cancer, you may want to consider reviewing your insurance needs

1 Prostate cancer. Cancer Council, September 2023

2 Prostate cancer in Australia statistics. Australian Government, September 2022

3 Prostate cancer in Australia: What do the numbers tell us? Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia, July 2022

4 Prostate cancer testing. Betterhealth.vic.gov.au, June 2023

5 What are the risk factors for prostate cancer? Australian Government, May 2023

6 Who gets prostate cancer? Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia 2022

7 Prostate cancer prevention. Prostate Cancer Foundation, May 2022

