Prostate Cancer

Most prostate cancer begins in the gland cells in the prostate. Known as a silent killer because men often do not have symptoms in early stages, prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer other than skin cancer among men in the United States and is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among men. If prostate cancer is detected early and before the cancer spreads, patients have a nearly 100 percent chance of survival after five years. Survival rates for all stages of prostate cancer have increased since the 1990s, but stabilized in recent years.

Statistics

- One in nine men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in his lifetime.
- One in 41 men will die from the disease, making it the second most common cause of cancer death in men.
- In 2019, 174,650 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in the United States, with 31,620 deaths.
- In Texas, an estimated 13,995 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in 2019, and 2,084 men will die from the disease.

Risk Factors

- Age: Men age 65 and older account for about 60 percent of all prostate cancer cases diagnosed. The likelihood of developing prostate cancer increases after age 50.
- Family History: Men with close relatives (father or brother) who have had prostate cancer are more than twice as likely to develop the disease.
- Race: African Americans have the highest rate of prostate cancer in the United States and are twice as likely to die from the disease as Caucasians.
- Genetic Factors: A gene mutation on BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 or having Lynch syndrome may denote an increased risk, but it is only a small percentage of cases.
- Diet: Men who consume high amounts of red meat or high-fat dairy products and few fruits and vegetables have a higher risk of prostate cancer.

Symptoms

The following may be symptoms of prostate cancer but could be linked to other health conditions. If these symptoms are present, men are encouraged to consult their physician for proper testing:

- Weak or interrupted urine flow
- Sudden urge to urinate
- Difficulty controlling urination
- Painful or burning urination
- Blood in urine or semen
- Pain or pressure in rectum
- Frequent pain or stiffness in spine, pelvis, hips, ribs, upper thighs, and other bones
- Painful ejaculation
- Decrease in amount of fluid ejaculated
- Frequent urination, especially at night
- Difficulty having an erection
- Difficulty fully emptying bladder
- Weakness or numbness in legs or feet
- Anemia

Prevention

- Eat a minimum of 2 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables daily. Soy, pomegranate, green tea, flaxseed, turmeric, and broccoli are rich in substances that may help prevent prostate cancer.
- Reduce consumption of red meat and high-fat dairy products.
- Regular exercise may decrease the risk of prostate cancer.
- Maintain a healthy body weight, as obesity can further complicate prostate cancer.

Screening

Men should discuss with their physicians the risks and benefits of prostate cancer screening to make an informed decision about testing. Most men should consider regular prostate screenings beginning at age 50. Men at high risk (African Americans and men whose father, brother, or son was diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65) should consider testing beginning at age 45. Consider screening at age 40 if more than one first-degree relative is diagnosed at an early age. Prostate screenings can include the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test and DRE (digital rectal exam).

Treatment Options

Prostate cancer may be treated by different members of the cancer care team. Treatment options vary depending on how advanced the cancer is and if it has spread to other body parts. Physicians will determine the most appropriate treatment for each patient, including surveillance, surgery, radiation therapy, proton therapy, hormone therapy, chemotherapy, vaccine treatment, bone-directed treatment, immunotherapy, and cryotherapy.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Society of Clinical Oncology, National Cancer Institute, Prostate Cancer Foundation, and Texas Cancer Registry

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