

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

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This year, over 200,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and over 30,000 will die from it. The prostate is a gland (located between the bladder and the rectum) that is involved in the production of semen. A normal prostate gland is the size of a walnut and it surrounds the urethra, a tube that carries urine from the bladder. Prostate cancer occurs when cancerous cells start developing in the tissues of the prostate. If prostate cancer goes undetected or untreated, these cancerous cells can spread to other organs beyond the prostate, decreasing a person's chances of survival.

Possible Symptoms of Prostate Cancer – see your doctor to discuss any symptoms listed below as they may also be due to other prostate conditions:

- Weak or interrupted flow of urine
- Frequent urination, especially at night
- Pain, burning or trouble urinating
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Hip, back or pelvic pain that doesn't go away
- Painful ejaculation

Potential risk factors for prostate cancer include age, family history and race. As a man ages, his risk for developing prostate cancer increase from 1 in 10,000 at age 39, to 1 in 8 between ages 60-79. A family history of prostate cancer and being African American can also put you at greater risk of developing this cancer.

Scientists believe that one-third of all cancers could be prevented by eating a healthy diet, maintaining a normal weight and exercising every day. The American Institute of Cancer Research (AIRC) also recommends the following strategies to reduce your risk of prostate cancer:

- 1) Choose low-fat, high fiber foods** – eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, especially foods high in beta-carotene like dark yellow or orange produce; eat sources of vitamin E like nuts, seeds, olive or canola oils in place of animal fats
- 2) Choose good sources of selenium** – an antioxidant that protects against cell damage – food sources include Brazil nuts, whole grains, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, seafood, poultry and lean meats
- 3) Choose lycopene-rich foods daily** – lycopene is another antioxidant that protects against cell damage – food sources of lycopene include tomatoes and tomato products (including ketchup), watermelon and pink grapefruit
- 4) Limit processed meats** like bacon, ham, sausage, hot dogs, pepperoni, salami and bologna to occasional use only

Your strongest weapon against prostate cancer is early detection. Starting at age 40, get an annual digital rectal exam and at age 50, get the prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test. If you have a strong family history of prostate cancer or are African American, you should start getting the PSA test at age 40. The five year survival rate for men whose prostate cancer is diagnosed before it spreads is 99%, so you owe to yourself and your family to get screened for prostate cancer as it is a very treatable disease if detected early.

Sources: American Cancer Society and the American Institute for Cancer Research

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