

Prostatectomy

What You Should Know



What is Prostate Cancer?

The prostate is a small walnut shaped gland in the pelvis of men. It is next to the bladder. Prostate cancer is a form of cancer that grows in the prostate gland. It is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths for men in the U.S.

Treatment for Prostate Cancer

There are many treatment options for prostate cancer. These may involve “watchful waiting,” surgery, radiation, hormones, chemotherapy, targeted therapy and immunotherapy.

Side effects differ based on the treatment for prostate cancer. Further, gay and bisexual men, as well as those people who have had adult feminizing gender-affirming surgery (GAS), may need to think over other issues when it comes to prostate cancer care and side effects. Treatment may affect erections, ejaculation and rectal function, which may impact sex for people with prostates. Talking to your doctor about your sexual orientation or gender identity will help you get the best treatment.

What is a Prostatectomy?

Surgery to remove the prostate is called a radical prostatectomy. Surgery is often a good choice if prostate cancer has not spread beyond the prostate. During the surgery, the prostate gland, the seminal vesicles and some tissue around the gland are removed. The seminal vesicles are the two sacs that connect to the vas deferens (a tube running through the testicles) and secrete semen.

What are the Benefits and Risks of Surgery?

The main benefit of a radical prostatectomy is that the prostate with cancer is removed. This is a huge benefit so long as the cancer hasn’t spread outside the prostate. Surgery also helps the doctor know if you need more treatment.

Surgery always comes with risks. Some problems from surgery can happen early and some later. Bleeding or infection can happen with any major surgery. Your health care team will help you to avoid or care for these problems.

What are Side Effects from Prostate Cancer Surgery?

There are two main side effects from prostate cancer surgery: erectile dysfunction (ED) and urinary incontinence (a loss of urine control). Most men are able to find ways to help with these issues over time.

ED is when a man can’t get or keep an erection that’s firm enough for sex. The good news is men can still have sex after prostate cancer surgery. Men treated with surgery will know how much erectile function they will get back by about the 24th month after surgery.

Being able to get erectile function back will depend on things such as your age (men under 60 have a better chance of regaining erections than older men), and how good your erectile function was before surgery. There are a number of aids for ED after prostate cancer surgery. Talk to your doctor about the best ones for you.

It is of great value to know that the desire for sex is not lost but may be affected with this surgery. If hormones are given as part of your care, your desire for sex may change.

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Prostate surgery may impact those who enjoy having prostate massage and rectal stimulation of the prostate. After prostate cancer surgery you won't be able to ejaculate semen, but you may still be able to have a dry orgasm.

Healing After Treatment

Along with changes in erections and ejaculation, there may be changes in rectal sensitivity. Getting your prostate removed may also affect anal sex.

After prostate cancer surgery, you may find it hard to talk with sexual partners about side effects of the surgery, such as problems getting erections, not being able to ejaculate semen or having the desire for sex be affected. Some men find it helpful to go to a support group to share their journey and get support from others.

About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts. To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, **UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions** or go to **UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist** to find a doctor near you.

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