



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT

# PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer can sometimes be associated with known risk factors for the disease. Many risk factors are modifiable though not all can be avoided.

The most consistent risk factors associated with prostate cancer are age, family history, and African-American ethnicity. Hormonal factors and high levels of animal fat and red meat in the diet are also suspected risk factors. Several previous occupational studies have linked farming to prostate cancer risk.

- **Age:** The risk of developing prostate cancer increases as a man gets older.
- **Diet and Lifestyle:** The effect of diet on prostate cancer risk is under study. A diet high in fat, especially animal fat, may be associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer. More studies are needed to determine if a low-fat diet with more fruits and vegetables helps prevent prostate cancer. Studies show that a diet

high in dairy products and calcium may be linked to an increased risk of prostate cancer, although the increase may be small.

- **Hormonal Prevention:** Studies are underway to discover the role of certain drugs, such as finasteride, that reduce the amount of male hormone as preventive agents for prostate cancer.
- **Race:** The risk of prostate cancer is dramatically higher among blacks, intermediate among whites, and lowest among native Japanese.
- The results of research on the association between **vasectomy** and prostate cancer were not consistent.
- **Obese** men are more likely to die from prostate cancer than men of normal weight, though no more likely to actually develop the disease.

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## Screening for prostate cancer

Prostate specific antigen (**PSA**) is an enzyme secreted by the prostate gland. It is usually found in low concentrations in serum, with levels increased by prostate diseases such as benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostatitis or prostate cancer.

Digital rectal examination (DRE) is the other main screening test. The limitation of digital rectal examination is its low sensitivity for the detection of early disease.

Regarding early detection of prostate cancer, the experts concluded that routine PSA testing should be offered in men when:

- Age is 50 years and greater, unless the man has increased risk factors, such as genetic predisposition via family history or African-American racial status. In these "at risk" men, PSA testing should be offered between 40 - 50 years of age.

- AND life expectancy is at least 10 years.
- AND should be performed in conjunction with the digital rectal exam (DRE), since the combination of the two tests is more sensitive for diagnosis than either one alone.

Regarding prostate biopsy, this is indicated when:

- PSA is 4.0 ng/ml or greater.
- PSA has increased substantially from one test to the next. An increase of 0.75 ng/ml or more between two annual tests appears to be reason for concern.
- DRE is abnormal. Since approximately 25% of prostate cancers are associated with PSA levels below 4.0 ng/ml, the DRE is also very important.

Source: National Cancer Institute  
[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics)

### Three steps to better health:

The most important you can do to avoid getting ill is to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

1. **Stop smoking.** If you fail to stop, try to cut down.
2. Do **physical activity!** Remember running for the bus, taking the stairs, dancing in your living room, walking the dog, wrestling with the kids – all count as exercise!
3. Make sure you keep a healthy diet. Have a look at our website to see how.

The Medical Service in Brussels can assist you in staying in good health. Start by having your **yearly medical check-up**. The doctor will evaluate your health and give you advice.

Our service also offers a **stop-smoking program**: *contact by mail ADMIN TABACSTOP.*

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