

Men's health information everyone should know

Signs and symptoms, risk factors and testing information for the most common cancer in men worldwide, from a cancer specialist nurse

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Key takeaways:

- More men get cancer than women, most likely due to a number of lifestyle factors and health behaviours
- The most common cancer that only affects men is prostate cancer
- Men who are over 50, who are black or who have a family history, have a higher risk of prostate cancer
- If you've noticed any new signs or symptoms, or have concerns about prostate cancer, always talk to your healthcare provider

Cancer is more common in men than women. [This is, in part, because men are more likely than women to smoke, to eat too much red and processed meat, eat too few fruits and vegetables, and more likely to drink alcohol](#) – all of which are risk factors for cancer. [Lung cancer was the most common cancer in men worldwide in 2020, followed by prostate and colorectal cancers](#). In this article, we look at the risk factors, signs and symptoms of prostate cancer, which only affects men, or people who were assigned male at birth.

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer affects the prostate – a gland at the base of the bladder. It is the second most common cancer in men and the fourth most common cancer globally.

Who is at risk of developing prostate cancer?

[Prostate cancer mainly affects men over 50 and the risk is higher if you are a black man.](#) If you have a family history of prostate, breast or ovarian cancer, your risk of developing it may be higher. [Being tall is a risk factor for developing prostate cancer for reasons we don't fully understand, and being overweight increases your risk of developing advanced prostate cancer,](#) which is when the cancer spreads to other parts of the body. If you are a trans woman you will still have a prostate. This means that trans women, as well as non-binary people assigned male at birth, can get prostate cancer.

What are the signs and symptoms of prostate cancer?

In the early stages of prostate cancer, there are often no signs and symptoms. Symptoms do not usually appear until the prostate is large enough to affect the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the penis (the urethra). This can change the way you urinate, [causing the following symptoms:](#)

- Difficulty starting to urinate or emptying your bladder
- A weak flow when you urinate
- A feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- Dribbling urine after you finish urinating
- Needing to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- A sudden need to urinate and/or leaking urine before you get to the toilet



If prostate cancer spreads to other parts of the body, it can cause symptoms including pain in the back, hips or pelvis; problems getting or keeping an erection; blood in the urine or semen and/or unexplained weight loss.

How do healthcare providers test for prostate cancer?

The most common test for men who are worried about prostate cancer is called the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. This test measures the level of PSA in a man's

blood. However, not all prostates release the same amount of PSA, so a raised PSA level can find prostate cancer at an early stage for some men, but suggest others have prostate cancer when they don't. The PSA test also can't tell the difference between aggressive and low-risk prostate cancers.

For these reasons, most countries do not offer routine prostate screening. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, or have no symptoms but are concerned about prostate cancer and your risk factors, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider.
