

Prostate Cancer. What does it mean to a family?

If you have prostate cancer, then other men in your family have an increased chance to develop prostate cancer. It is important for family members to be aware that they may be at risk, so they can take action.

Prostate Cancer Can Run in Families

There is a chance that any man can develop prostate cancer during his lifetime, even if no one else in the family has ever had prostate cancer. However, the chance increases if family members have prostate cancer. For example, if a man is diagnosed with prostate cancer, then the risk is doubled for his sons and brothers. If two or three men in a family are diagnosed with prostate cancer, then the risk in the family increases even more.

Finding it early

Survival from prostate cancer is nearly 100% if found in the early stages. Early signs of prostate cancer can be caught by screening. Men who are at high risk should ask their doctor about DRE and PSA screening. The American Urological Association and the American Cancer Society recommend these tests beginning at age 40 for men at high risk for prostate cancer.

Talking With Your Family

Our reason for giving you this information is in hopes that you will share it with your loved ones, especially your sons, your brothers, and your nephews. You may want to begin by telling others in your family about your diagnosis of prostate cancer, and then encourage the men to talk to a doctor about their testing options. Sometimes it can be difficult to talk about prostate cancer, but there are ways to make this easier. For example, at a family gathering you could spend some time talking about all of the family history, and then mention prostate cancer along with any other medical conditions in your family. Or if you do not want to tell the whole family, you could talk with one or two family members. If you are not comfortable talking, then you could try writing a short letter and including this information sheet. But the important thing is to find a way to pass on this information to the people who need it most in your family—especially your sons and brothers. If you don't, then who will?

Taking Action

To sum it up, here are the two things to tell your family:

1. Tell them about prostate cancer
2. Encourage the men to talk with their doctor about PSA and DRE screening

If you have additional questions about the information in this handout, please do not hesitate to contact us toll free at 1-866-487-2344 (option 3) or locally at 336-713-7581.