

A

Active surveillance

A relatively new way of monitoring prostate cancer which aims to avoid unnecessary treatment in men with low-risk cancer. It involves close monitoring of PSA, with repeat biopsy, and aims to detect cancers that are starting to behave more aggressively in time for curative treatment to be possible. *c.f.* Watchful Waiting

Adenocarcinoma

Cancer that occurs in the cells of a gland, such as the prostate gland. The majority of prostate cancers are adenocarcinomas.

Adjuvant therapy

Treatment given straight after the main treatment to increase the likelihood of the treatment being successful.

Advanced prostate cancer

Prostate cancer that has spread outside the prostate gland, either locally or to other parts of the body.

Aggressive

This word may be used to describe a cancer that is more likely to develop and spread quickly.

Alpha-blockers

Drugs that can be used to help treat Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) by relaxing the muscles of the prostate gland and the neck of the bladder. This allows urine to flow out of the bladder more easily.

Androgens

Hormones that are responsible for male characteristics. The male sex hormone 'testosterone' is an androgen.

Anti-androgens

Drugs that block the effects of testosterone and stop prostate cancer cells from growing. Anti-androgens are a type of hormone therapy.

B

Benign

Not cancerous.

BPH (Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia)

A non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate. It is a common condition that mainly affects men over the age of 50.

Bilateral orchidectomy

An operation to remove both testicles.

Biopsy

A procedure that involves taking samples of tissue to be looked at under a microscope. Samples of tissue from the prostate gland may be used to help diagnose prostate cancer.

Bisphosphonates

A group of drugs which may be used by men with prostate cancer that has spread to the bones. They do not treat the cancer but may help with symptoms.

Bladder neck incision

A procedure to help improve the flow of urine and relieve urinary symptoms by making a small cut in the neck of the bladder.

Bone marrow

Soft tissue found inside the bones that makes red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets. Chemotherapy treatment for prostate cancer affects the way your bone marrow works.

Bone scan

A scan of the whole body to detect bony metastases which uses a radioactive dye to highlight the bones. Any areas of damaged bone show up on the scan as a 'hot spot'. A bone scan may be used to find out whether prostate cancer has spread to the bones.

Brachytherapy

A treatment for localised prostate cancer that uses radiation from implants inside the prostate gland to destroy cancer cells.

C**Cancer**

The abnormal or uncontrolled growth of cells in the body. Cells may spread to surrounding tissue and other parts of the body.

Carcinoma

Cancer which begins in the tissues that cover the outside and line the inside of the body's organs. Carcinomas are the most common type of cancer.

Catheter (urinary)

A tube passed into the bladder to help drain urine from the bladder.

Chemotherapy

Drugs used to destroy cancer cells. This type of treatment may be used to treat prostate cancer that has spread outside the prostate gland and is no longer responding to hormone therapy. Men with an earlier stage of prostate cancer may be offered chemotherapy as part of a clinical trial.

Clinical trial

A research study that involves people to investigate new drugs, technology or medical procedures.

Complete androgen blockade (CAB)

See Maximal androgen blockade.

Cryotherapy

A treatment that uses freezing and thawing to destroy cancer cells. This is a newer type of treatment for prostate cancer and you may be offered it as part of a clinical trial or national study. Also known as 'cryosurgery' or 'cryoablation'.

CT scan

A scan that uses a computer linked to an x-ray machine to take a series of pictures of the body. You may have a CT scan if there is a risk of your cancer spreading and you are considering active treatment options such as radiotherapy or radical prostatectomy.

Cystitis

Inflammation of the bladder that causes a burning sensation when you pass urine.

D**Diagnosis**

Identifying that someone has a particular health problem or condition.

Digital rectal examination (DRE)

A physical examination in which a doctor or nurse feels the prostate gland with a gloved, lubricated finger through the rectum (back passage). The DRE is used to help diagnose prostate problems.

E**Enlarged prostate**

see Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia.

Erectile dysfunction

The failure to achieve or maintain an erection strong enough for sexual intercourse or other sexual activity.

External beam radiotherapy

Radiotherapy using high energy x-ray beams directed at the prostate gland from outside the body. This type of treatment may be used to treat localised or locally advanced prostate cancer.

F**5-alpha reductase inhibitors**

Drugs that are used to treat Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) by shrinking your prostate or stopping it getting any bigger.

Fistula

An abnormal opening between two parts of the body that may be caused by injury, infection, or inflammation, or may be created during surgery. This is a complication of some treatments for prostate cancer, where a hole forms between the back passage and the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder).

Flare

A temporary rise in the level of testosterone caused by the first injection of some types of hormone therapy.

Fraction

A single session of a course of radiotherapy treatment.

Frequency

The frequent need to pass urine, usually more than about eight to ten times a day. This can be a symptom of a prostate problem.

G

GP (General Practitioner)

A medical doctor sometimes described as a 'family doctor' who provides primary care.

Genes

Your genes are the biological information that act as an instruction manual for your body and control how your body works. Each cell in the body contains thousands of genes.

Genetics

Used to describe the way genes are passed on from your parents (inherited).

Grade

See Gleason grade.

Gleason grade

Cancer cells in a biopsy sample are given a Gleason grade to show how active they are. The cells are given a grade of between 1 and 5. Non-aggressive cells are grade 1 and the most aggressive are grade 5.

Gleason score

A scale that shows how aggressive a cancer is. The Gleason score is worked out by adding together the Gleason grades of the two most common types of cell in a biopsy sample. Gleason scores run from 2 to 10. The higher the score, the more aggressive the cancer. Gleason scores of 6 or less are regarded as "low risk".

H

Hesitancy

The need to wait a while before being able to pass urine, even when the bladder is full.

HIFU (High Intensity Focused Ultrasound)

A treatment that uses ultrasound to heat and destroy cancer cells. HIFU is a fairly new treatment for prostate cancer and you may be offered it as part of a clinical trial or national study.

Hormones

Chemicals found in the body which help control some of the body's functions. The male hormone testosterone can cause prostate cancer to grow more quickly.

Hormone refractory/hormone independent

Cancer is described as hormone refractory when it no longer responds to hormone therapy. This can also be called hormone independent or castration resistant cancer.

Hormone therapy

Cancer specialists use hormone therapy to stop testosterone from reaching the prostate cancer cells. There are three main types of hormone therapy using surgery, injections or tablets.

Hot flushes

A common side effect of hormone therapy for prostate cancer. Hot flushes give a sudden feeling of being very warm, but can affect each man differently, from feeling overheated for a few seconds to an hour of sweating and discomfort. Also known as "Hot Flashes".

I

IGRT (Image guided radiotherapy)

Radiotherapy treatment that uses implanted gold seeds to guide the radiation beam.

Impotence

See Erectile dysfunction.

IMRT (Intensity-modulated radiotherapy)

A type of radiotherapy using radiation beams that can be adjusted to give different doses of radiotherapy to different parts of the treatment area.

Incidence

The number of people that get a particular disease each year.

L

Laparoscopic radical prostatectomy

Surgery to remove the whole of the prostate gland using instruments inserted through small cuts in your abdomen. Also known as 'keyhole surgery'.

Laser prostatectomy

A procedure that may be used to treat Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH). A laser is used to remove tissue from the prostate gland that is pressing on the urethra.

Laser enucleation

See Laser prostatectomy.

LHRH agonists (luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone agonists)

Injections that block the production of testosterone from the testicles. LHRH agonists are a type of hormone therapy.

Libido

Sexual desire. Prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment can affect your desire for sex.

Localised prostate cancer

Prostate cancer that is contained within the prostate gland.

Locally advanced prostate cancer

Prostate cancer that has spread to the area just outside the prostate gland.

Lymph nodes

Small bean shaped structures that are part of the body's lymphatic system that help the body to fight disease and infection. Also known as lymph glands.

M

Malignant

This is used to describe a tumour that is cancerous and has the ability to spread. The opposite of benign.

Maximal androgen blockade

Also called 'combined androgen blockade'. Both injections and tablets are used to stop testosterone reaching prostate cancer cells.

Metastasis

The spread of cancer from where the cancer started to other parts of the body. Cancers that have spread are called 'metastases' or 'secondaries'. A cancer that has spread is said to have 'metastasised'.

Metastatic

Cancer that has spread from the main tumour to another part of the body. See Metastasis.

Morbidity

This can be used to describe disease itself or the side effects caused by treatment. It is also used to describe the number of people who have a disease in a particular population.

Mortality

A word used to describe the number of people who die from a disease. It is often used in cancer statistics.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

An imaging technique that uses magnets to take scans of the body. You may have an MRI if there is a risk that your cancer has spread and you are considering active treatment options such as radiotherapy or radical prostatectomy.

Multi disciplinary team (MDT)

The team of health professionals or specialists involved in your care. The team will include a specialist nurse, a consultant oncologist and a consultant urologist.

N

Neoadjuvant

Treatment given before the main treatment to increase the likelihood of the treatment being successful.

Neoplasm

Another word for cancer.

Nerve-sparing

A surgical technique during a radical prostatectomy that aims to avoid damaging the nerves responsible for erections.

Nocturia

The need to get up frequently at night to pass urine.

O

Oestrogen

A female sex hormone that may be used as a type of hormone therapy for men with advanced prostate cancer by controlling testosterone levels.

Oncologist

A doctor who specialises in cancer treatment.

Orchidectomy

Surgical removal of the testicles (castration) - a type of hormone therapy for prostate cancer to stop the production of testosterone.

Osteoporosis

Bone thinning. This can have many causes. In prostate cancer it is a possible side effect of some types of hormone therapy.

P

Palliative care

Care given to improve the quality of life of people who have a serious or life-threatening disease. The goal of palliative care is to control pain and other symptoms and to meet a person's psychological, social and spiritual needs, and thereby achieve the best quality of life for patients and their families. Many aspects of palliative care are also applicable earlier in the course of the illness in conjunction with other treatments.

Palliative radiotherapy

Radiotherapy given to help control symptoms and pain caused by cancer, rather than treating the cancer itself.

Pathologist

A doctor who specialises in studying the body's cells and tissue to identify diseases.

Pelvis

The lower part of the abdomen found between the hip bones.

Perineum

The area of the body between the back of the scrotum and the anus.

Proctitis

Inflammation of the lining of the bowel. This can be caused by radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

Prognosis

The expected outcome or end result of treatment. Often used to describe life expectancy.

Prostatectomy

See Radical prostatectomy.

Prostatitis

Inflammation or infection of the prostate gland.

PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen)

A protein that is produced in large quantities by the prostate gland, which liquifies semen.

PSA density

This is used as a way of measuring your PSA level in relation to the size of your prostate gland.

PSA test

A test that measures the amount of PSA present in the blood stream. Normally very little PSA escapes into the blood stream, so a high level may indicate prostate problems, including prostate cancer.

Q**Quality of life**

A term often used to describe how treatment might affect an individual's life. If an individual has a good quality of life, then they are likely to have a feeling of general well being, be untroubled by pain and symptoms and able to carry out normal daily activities.

R**Radical prostatectomy**

An operation to remove the whole prostate gland. Used to treat prostate cancer that is contained within the prostate gland (localised disease).

Radiotherapy

The use of radiation to destroy cancer cells. The term 'radiotherapy' is used to describe all types of radiotherapy including external beam radiotherapy and brachytherapy.

Rectum

Sometimes described as the 'back passage', this is the last part of the large intestine before the anus.

Recurrence

A term used to describe cancer that has returned after treatment.

Risk factor

Something that may make you more likely to develop a particular disease. For example, the risk of getting prostate cancer increases with age, so age is a risk factor for prostate cancer.

Robotic prostatectomy

Laparoscopic prostatectomy, when it is carried out with the help of a robot.

S**Screening**

Testing the general population to find out if people have a particular disease at an early stage, before anyone could be aware of it through symptoms.

Scrotum

The pouch of skin that contains the testicles.

Sphincter (urinary)

The circular muscle that surrounds the tube through which urine and semen are passed (urethra).

Secondary cancer

Cancer that has spread from where it first started to another part of the body. Also called 'metastases'.

Seminal vesicles

The two sacs near the prostate gland that store sperm and produce some of the fluid in semen.

Stage

How far the cancer has spread. The most common method used in prostate cancer is the TNM system (Tumour-Nodes-Metastases).

Steroids

A type of drug used to control swelling and inflammation. Steroids may be used for advanced prostate cancer to help reduce inflammation in areas where the tumour has spread.

Stricture

Narrowing of the tube that carries urine from the bladder and out of the body (urethra). Can be caused by Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH), inflammation of the prostate gland or prostate cancer.

T

3D conformal radiotherapy

Radiotherapy treatment that uses 3D images to shape the radiotherapy beams to fit the size and shape of the prostate.

Testicles/ testes

Part of a man's reproductive organs that produce sperm and are the main source of testosterone.

Testosterone

Male sex hormone.

Tumour

Abnormal growth of cells. The word 'tumour' is commonly used instead of saying 'cancer'.

TURP (Trans Urethral Resection of the Prostate)

Surgery to treat Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) which involves removing the part of the enlarged prostate gland that is pressing against the urethra.

TRUS (Trans Rectal Ultrasound Scan)

A procedure that uses sound waves to make an image of the prostate gland. A probe is inserted into the rectum at the same time as a biopsy to help to diagnose prostate cancer.

U

Urethra (male)

The tube that carries urine from the bladder and semen from the prostate through the penis and out of the body.

Urgency

A strong need to pass urine, almost immediately.

Urinary incontinence

Not being able to control your bladder. This can range from leaking a few drops of urine to not being able to control when you pass urine at all.

Urology

The speciality of medicine that diagnoses and treats diseases of the urinary system including the prostate gland.

W**Watchful waiting**

A way of monitoring men with prostate cancer with the aim of avoiding treatment unless symptoms develop. This type of treatment may be an option for men with prostate cancer who may not benefit from treatment, for example men with other serious health problems. Treatment, if it becomes necessary (e.g. through the development of symptoms, or rapidly rising PSA), will be palliative. This is different from active surveillance where treatment is intended to be curative.