

Living with prostate cancer?

Get back to doing what you love

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What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer occurs when abnormal cells develop in the prostate (a small gland located below the bladder and in front of the rectum in men) and start growing in an uncontrolled way. In most men, prostate cancer is a slow-growing disease.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Australian men (after skin cancers). Each year, around 16,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer. 95% of men survive five years or more after diagnosis, particularly if the cancer has not spread to other areas.*

A person's experience of prostate cancer after diagnosis is unique to them and there are many treatments available for prostate cancer.

Symptoms and causes

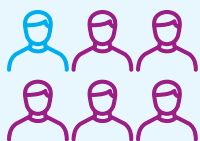
While we don't know the causes of prostate cancer, there are two risk factors linked with its development: age and family history. The risk of developing prostate cancer increases with age. You have a higher chance of developing prostate cancer if you have a family member, or more than one close relative diagnosed with it.

There are many different treatments available for prostate cancer and treatment often depends on age, general health, the grade and stage of cancer. Treatment is uniquely tailored to you and may include:

- Active surveillance (monitoring of cancer that is not causing symptoms and is considered low risk)
- Watchful waiting (monitoring of cancer where the cancer is not likely to cause a problem in a person's lifetime)
- Surgery (prostatectomy or removal of the prostate)
- Radiotherapy
- Androgen deprivation therapy (ADT), also known as hormone therapy (used to slow testosterone production and cancer growth)
- Chemotherapy.

Following prostate cancer treatment, men often experience issues of:

- Fatigue, lethargy
- Loss of muscle strength and fitness
- Depression
- Urinary incontinence
- Erectile dysfunction and/or
- Bladder/bowel dysfunction.



1 in 6 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer by the age of 85.



Keeping physically active before and after a prostate cancer diagnosis has been shown to reduce the risk of death by 40-50%.



Physiotherapy can help treat incontinence after prostate surgery.



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How can physio help?

After a diagnosis of prostate cancer, men often have to navigate a 180-degree change in their lifestyle. Juggling ongoing treatments and experiencing treatment-related side effects such as fatigue, loss of muscle strength, fitness, erectile dysfunction and bladder/bowel dysfunction can impact on your quality of life and be overwhelming.

Physiotherapists are part of the core multidisciplinary healthcare team to guide and motivate you to understand how to best improve your health with education and a program that is tailored to you.

If you have advanced prostate cancer or cancer that has spread to your bones, a physiotherapist will be able to supervise and guide exercise in a safe manner that builds up muscle and protects bones and joints.

An initial consultation with a men's pelvic health or cancer physiotherapist, will involve discussion about the condition and what you want to achieve from the treatment, as well as extensive education on the exercises required. An ultrasound of the perineum may be done to see how well the pelvic floor muscles are working. A tailored exercise program will then be provided, which will be reviewed and adjusted to ensure relevance to your pelvic floor and fitness goal achievement. The exercises can be done at home with the frequency and intensity dependent on your diagnosis

If you are undergoing prostate surgery (prostatectomy), it is standard practice for surgeons to refer you to see a pelvic health physiotherapist prior to the prostate surgery. This ensures you are exercising your pelvic floor muscles correctly, and to follow-up after surgery to allow the best possible chance of recovery. Getting back to normal work, family and exercise routines are so important for recovery, and proper physiotherapy treatment will help you get there.

Treatment

Men's pelvic health and cancer physiotherapists are able to provide holistic, specialised treatment at various stages of prostate cancer.

Before surgery, radiotherapy or other treatment:

An individually tailored program will be provided by the physiotherapist and will often include education, pelvic floor muscle training and exercise to maximise physical fitness and fast-track recovery after treatment.

During radiotherapy or other treatment: A physiotherapist will work with you to monitor and manage any changes in your health, strength and fitness, mood and develop a program to keep you fit, reduce symptoms and maximise quality of life.

After surgery, radiotherapy or other treatment:

A physiotherapist will use various rehabilitation treatments to address any continence or leakage issues, restore any loss in fitness and muscle strength that occurred while having cancer treatment, and maximise functional abilities, psychological status and quality of life long-term.

Men's pelvic health and cancer physiotherapists often use other specialised assessment and treatment strategies such as:

- Real-time ultrasound to assess pelvic floor muscle function
- Pelvic floor muscle training
- Pilates or core stability exercise training
- Biofeedback training.

Physiotherapists are able to guide you along each step of your rehabilitation journey to empower you to look after your health through the cancer diagnosis.

What next?

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'Cancer, Palliative Care and Lymphoedema' option under special interest area in the 'refine your search' drop-down box.

Do you live with a chronic health condition?

Physiotherapists help you recover from injury, reduce pain and stiffness, increase mobility and prevent further injury. They listen to your needs to tailor a treatment specific to your condition.

You don't need a doctor's referral to see a physiotherapist, but in many cases physiotherapists, doctors and other health professionals will work together to plan and manage treatment for your specific condition.

Some of the many techniques physiotherapists use to treat and help you overcome your condition include exercise programs to improve mobility and strengthen muscles, joint and/or soft tissue manipulation and mobilisation to reduce pain and stiffness and muscle re-education to improve control.

* <https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/cancer-types/prostate-cancer/statistics>