

What You
Need to Know



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Prostate cancer can be a daunting diagnosis, especially when it progresses to advanced stages. This guide aims to provide comprehensive and understandable information about advanced prostate cancer for patients and their loved ones. By understanding the nature of this disease, its symptoms, and available treatments, individuals can make informed decisions and navigate their cancer experience with greater confidence and clarity.

Understanding advanced prostate cancer

Overview of prostate cancer

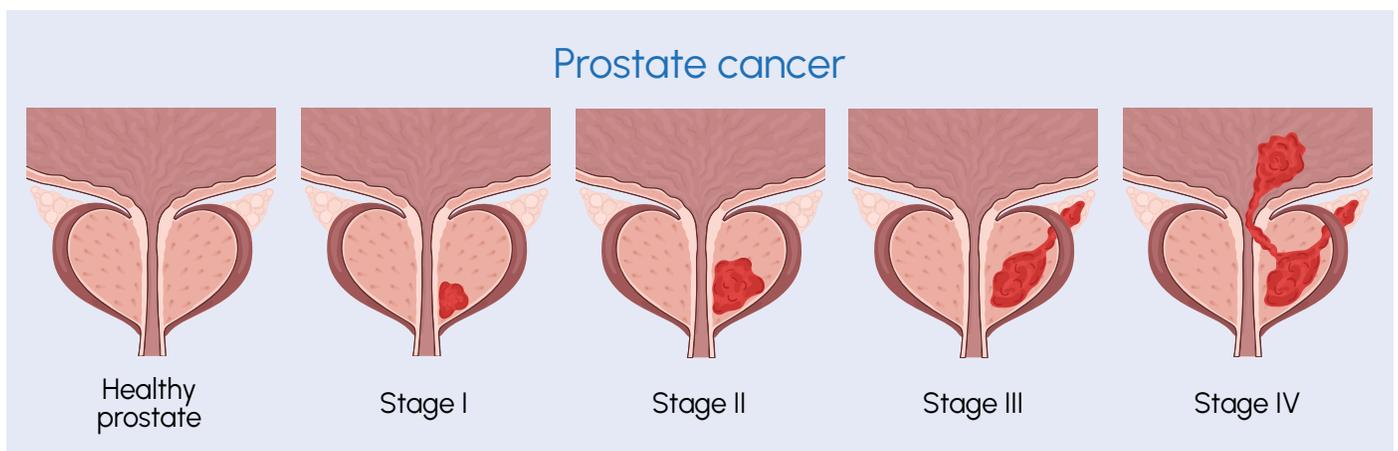
Prostate cancer originates in the prostate gland, a small walnut-shaped organ that produces seminal fluid. In its early stages, prostate cancer often grows slowly and may not cause noticeable symptoms. However, as the disease progresses, it can advance to more aggressive forms, known as advanced prostate cancer.

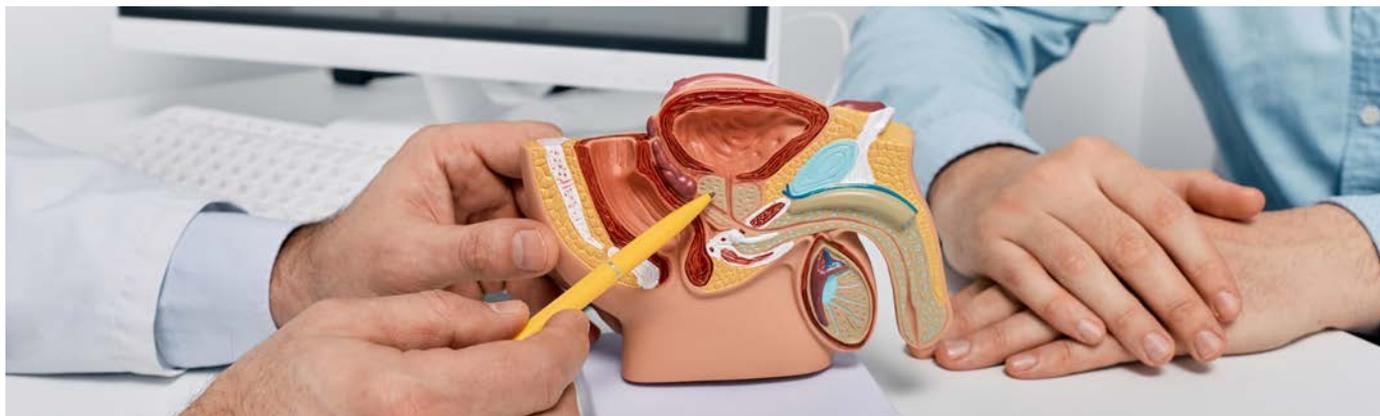
Definition and stages

Advanced prostate cancer is characterized by cancer cells that have spread beyond the prostate gland to other parts of the body. The stages of advanced prostate cancer are typically categorized using the TNM system, which assesses:

- (T) the size and extent of the tumor,
- (N) whether cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes,
- (M) whether it has metastasized to distant organs.

Common stages include locally advanced (stage III) and metastatic (stage IV) prostate cancer.





Types of advanced prostate cancer

Advanced prostate cancer encompasses various types and degrees of spread, each affecting survivability and treatment options differently.

Some cases of locally advanced cancer can be successfully treated and even cured. Others will be controlled. At the metastatic stage, treatment options may focus on symptom management, controlling cancer spread, and improving quality of life. This stage often requires a multidisciplinary approach involving urologists, radiation oncologists, oncologists, and other healthcare professionals to provide personalized care and support.

This may include one of the following:

<p>Locally advanced cancer</p>	<p>When the cancer begins to spread beyond the prostate without going too far away, it may also reach neighboring tissues, such as the seminal vesicles, the bladder, the rectum, and the pelvic wall.</p>
<p>Recurrent cancer</p>	<p>When the cancer reappears after initial treatment (surgery, radiotherapy, or brachytherapy). Recurrence can occur locally, where cancer cells reappear in the prostate or nearby tissues, or it can occur in distant organs, indicating that the cancer has metastasized.</p>
<p>Metastatic cancer</p>	<p>When the cancer has spread to other parts of the body away from the prostate. More often, metastases of prostate cancer are located in distant lymph nodes and bones.</p>
<p>Castrate-resistant prostate cancer (CRPC)</p>	<p>When the cancer continues to progress despite being chemically or surgically castrated.</p>

How it spreads

Prostate cancer spreads through a process called metastasis, in which cancer cells break away from the primary tumor and travel through the bloodstream or lymphatic system to other parts of the body. The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and nodes that helps transport fluids and filter waste; in prostate cancer, it can play a role in the spread of cancer cells to other parts of the body.

That's why your doctor closely monitors your PSA levels (meaning Prostate-Specific Antigen, a protein produced by both normal and cancerous cells in the prostate gland). A significant increase over a short period of time, along with imaging tests, could indicate that the cancer has come back, either with or without metastases.

Symptoms and diagnosis

Common symptoms

- Advanced prostate cancer can cause a variety of symptoms, which may vary depending on the extent and location of the metastases. For example, prostate cancer that has spread to the bones may cause pain in the spine, hips or pelvic bones.
- Urinary symptoms such as increased frequency, urgency, or difficulty urinating may also occur due to tumor growth pressing on the urethra or bladder. However, these same urinary symptoms may also be related to non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate.
- Additionally, individuals with advanced prostate cancer may experience fatigue, weight loss, muscle wasting, and loss of appetite.



Unfortunately symptoms are not always a good tool to evaluate advanced prostate cancer as it is possible to have very minimal or no symptoms.

Diagnostic tests

Diagnosing advanced prostate cancer typically involves a combination of medical history review, physical examination, and diagnostic tests. These will include prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests to measure levels of a protein produced by the prostate gland, as well as digital rectal examinations (DRE) to assess the size and texture of the prostate gland.

To confirm the presence of cancer and determine its stage and extent, further tests may be conducted, such as transrectal ultrasound-guided prostate biopsy, a medical procedure that involves taking small tissue samples from the prostate gland for examination under a microscope to determine the diagnosis. Imaging tests may also be performed to visualize the prostate gland and detect any spread of cancer to nearby tissues or distant organs. They may include:

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)	A medical imaging technique used to create detailed pictures of the inside of your body. For prostate cancer, it helps capture images of the prostate and surrounding areas. This safe and painless procedure allows doctors to examine tissues, organs, and other structures.
Computed tomography (CT) scan, or TACO scan	A medical imaging test used to get detailed pictures of the inside of your body. It helps your doctor see structures such as bones, organs, and lymph nodes in the abdominal and pelvic areas.
Bone scan	A medical imaging test commonly used for prostate cancer patients to check whether cancer has spread (metastasized) to the bones
Positron emission tomography targeting PSMA (PSMA PET/CT)	An advanced nuclear imaging technique sometimes used in prostate cancer management. It combines PET imaging with a CT scan to provide detailed information about the presence and location of prostate cancer in the body.

Early diagnosis and accurate characterization of the extent of advanced prostate cancer is crucial for initiating appropriate treatment and managing the disease effectively.

Treatment options

The treatment you will receive depends on your overall health, the extent of cancer spread in your body, and the initial treatment received before the disease spreads. At a more advanced stage, some of these treatments can be administered alone, alternately, in combination, or through clinical trials, and may be part of first-line, second-line, or third-line treatments.

Locally advanced cancer	
Radical surgery	Surgery involves removing the prostate, surrounding tissues, and sometimes the pelvic lymph nodes if cancer cells are found there. After surgery, radiotherapy, hormone therapy, or both may be offered to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

Locally advanced or metastatic cancer	
External or internal radiation therapy	Radiotherapy irradiates the prostate from an external or internal source (brachytherapy) to shrink tumors and destroy cancer cells. It can be combined with hormone therapy when the cancer is at high risk of progression.
Standard hormone therapy	Hormone therapy, alone or combined with radiotherapy or chemotherapy, blocks the production or effects of testosterone, which is necessary for the growth of prostate cancer cells. You may receive a hormone therapy injection every 1, 3, 4, or 6 months, alone or in combination with next-generation oral hormone therapy.

Recurrence, metastatic cancer or castrate-resistant prostate cancer	
Next-generation hormone therapy	These oral therapies may be used when cancer returns after initial treatment. They can be combined with standard hormone therapy to delay the progression of metastases or used in combination with both standard hormone therapy and chemotherapy in certain patients.

Metastatic cancer	
Chemotherapy	Chemotherapy uses drugs to destroy cancer cells. For metastatic prostate cancer, chemotherapy can be combined with standard and next-generation hormone therapy.
Targeted therapy	Targeted therapy refers to oral treatments which are designed to treat cancers with specific molecular features or genetic mutations. It can be used for metastatic prostate cancer patients that no longer respond to hormone therapy and have specific genetic mutations.
Nuclear therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Radioligand therapy is an advanced option for treating metastatic prostate cancer that no longer responds to standard treatments. This nuclear medicine treatment targets cancer cells expressing a protein called PSMA, helping to destroy them, reduce disease-related symptoms, and shrink or stabilize tumors. While this promising therapy is not yet reimbursed in Canada, efforts are ongoing to make it more accessible in the future, offering hope to patients with advanced prostate cancer. · Nuclear medicine therapy can also be used for advanced prostate cancers which no longer respond to standard treatments and are predominantly spread to the bone.



The role of genes in advanced prostate cancer

Prostate cancer can be influenced by genetic changes, some of which are inherited from parents, while others develop over time in the body. Both types can impact the aggressiveness of the cancer and how it spreads.

Gene mutations and family history

Some men inherit gene mutations, such as BRCA, that increase the risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer, making it grow and spread faster. A family history of prostate, breast, ovarian or pancreatic cancer may indicate the need for genetic testing, which can help guide treatment and inform relatives of their potential risks.

Other gene mutations, which are not inherited but acquired, can develop within cancer cells as the disease progresses, influencing how it behaves and responds to treatment.

Learn more about [gene mutations and prostate cancer here](#).

Why this matters for treatment

Certain gene mutations can make prostate cancer more resistant to standard treatments like hormone therapy. Identifying these changes through genetic testing allows doctors to select targeted therapies, such as PARP inhibitors combined with other treatments, like next-generation hormone therapy, which may be more effective for men with specific genetic alterations.

Learn more about [PARP inhibitors and how they work here](#).

The importance of genetic testing

Genetic testing is becoming a key part of prostate cancer care. A doctor can perform genetic and/or tumor testing using a tissue or blood sample to:

- Determine if targeted therapies (like PARP inhibitors) could help slow the disease;
- Inform family members about their own potential cancer risks.

If you have advanced or metastatic prostate cancer, ask your doctor about genetic testing. It can provide valuable insights into your treatment options and help improve your chances of managing the disease effectively.



Managing symptoms and side effects

Pain

People with advanced cancer may experience pain. It can impact you both physically and emotionally, affecting healing and contributing to fatigue, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping. Depending on your cancer and the type of treatments you receive, you may experience:

- pain that is acute (short-term);
- chronic pain (long-term);
- breakthrough pain (occurs despite a regular dose of pain medicine).



Tips for managing pain

The most important thing to know about cancer pain is that there are options available to treat it. Your healthcare team has many ways to help you manage pain, and there are a few things you can do to help them:

- **Speak up**
Nobody is expecting you to “just deal with it” and nobody will think you’re weak for admitting you’re in pain. The more your healthcare team knows, the better equipped they are to help get your pain under control.
- **Track your pain**
Note when pain happens, what triggered it, where it is, how strong it is (try a simple scale from 1 to 10) and what you did to try and make it better. This kind of information is very helpful to your healthcare team as they try to get your pain under control.
- **Stick with it**
It may take hours or days to get your pain under control. In the meantime, many strong pain medications can have side effects like confusion, lethargy and sleepiness. Don’t let these stop you from sticking with your pain medication regimen! After the first few doses, these side effects often resolve and you’ll feel more like yourself again.



Work with your healthcare team

You and your healthcare team can put together a pain management plan. This may include:

- Over the counter medication
- Prescription medication
- Treatments that remove the source of the pain e.g. radiation therapy to the area causing pain

Fatigue

Fatigue is the most common symptom reported by people undergoing prostate cancer treatments and it can be acute or chronic. Some of the common symptoms include:

- Sleeping more than usual, or still feeling exhausted after a good night’s sleep;
- Tiring quickly during activities, or having lower energy all of the time;
- Changes in your emotions (like irritability or mood swings), or a general loss of interest in life;
- Trouble concentrating, thinking, or remembering.

While feeling tired may seem like a minor inconvenience compared to some of the other issues you experience, it can have a serious impact on your day-to-day activities and quality of life.



Tips for managing fatigue

■ Get enough sleep

Keep a regular routine to help you get a good night's sleep. Do things that relax you leading up to bedtime, and make sure your bed, pillows and sheets are comfortable. Avoid sleeping too much during the day as this can make you feel more tired.

■ Save your energy

Note when your energy is high, and plan activities and appointments around those times of day. You may need to be active for shorter periods, and don't forget to plan rests as well.

■ Ask for help

Your family and friends are there to support you, so don't be shy about taking them up on offers to help. Cooking, chores, driving to appointments are just some of the simple ways they can help.

■ Exercise

Regular exercise (both aerobic and weight training) can help improve your energy levels and reduce fatigue – even something as simple as walking. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting or changing your exercise program.

■ Eat right

Eat a [well-balanced diet](#) and [drink plenty of fluids](#), especially when your energy and appetite are good. In between, try to snack every 2-3 hours.

■ Manage your mood

Depression and anxiety can increase your feelings of fatigue. Consult our website [Side effects section](#) on how to look after your emotional well-being.



Work with your healthcare team

If your fatigue has a specific cause, your healthcare team can take steps to treat it, such as nutritional supplements, medicines or blood transfusions, so always keep them up to date on how you're feeling.

Erectile dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction (ED), also called impotence, is the inability to get and keep an erection firm enough to have sex – even though you can still experience pleasure, have an orgasm and be fertile. ED is a common side effect of prostate cancer treatments, including surgery (radical prostatectomy), radiation and hormonal therapies. Depending on your type of treatment and your age, your ED may either be temporary or [permanent](#).



Tips for managing erectile dysfunction

If you have ED as the result of prostate cancer treatment, it can be yet another source of frustration in your life. But there are a few ways you can help gain control over your situation:

■ Have patience

Don't assume you have a permanent problem and nothing can be done. Depending on your treatment, you may recover your erectile function, but it can take a longer time than you expected. In the meantime, [try to control your anxiety around sexual encounters and activity](#), which can make ED worse.

■ Involve your partner

Honest and open communication can help make sure they know that this isn't a sign of diminished interest in them, and can help you explore other ways to satisfy one another. [Treatment is often more successful when a man involves his partner](#).

■ Manage your mood

Stress, anxiety and depression can seriously impact [intimacy](#) and erectile function. Be open with your healthcare team about all the issues surrounding your treatment and recovery.



Work with your healthcare team

Depending on the cause of your ED, your healthcare team has several options to help you achieve erections, including:

- Medications (including pills, injections, and medicated urethral systems)
- Vacuum constriction devices
- Penile prosthesis

You might also want to consider consulting other experts in the field who could offer valuable advice and are specialized in this area such as: sexologists and specialized perineal physiotherapists.



Hot flashes

About 50-80% of men on hormonal therapies for prostate cancer will experience some sort of hot flashes. They usually start as a sudden feeling of warmth in the face and chest that then spreads to the rest of the body in waves, lasting anywhere from 2 to 30 minutes. You may also experience sweating, reddening of your skin, a racing heart or feelings of anxiousness.

The exact cause of hot flashes is unknown, but it may be related to how hormones interact with a part of your brain called the hypothalamus, which controls body temperature.



Tips for managing hot flashe

Hot flashes usually get better as your body gets used to treatment or if medication is stopped, but there are a number of things you can do on a daily basis to help manage them:

- Dress in layers so that you can remove them when you get hot, and wear looser clothing in lighter fabrics (e.g. clothes made with cotton).
- Stick to air conditioned or cool areas with lots of air circulation (e.g. from a fan or open window).
- Avoid hot drinks, caffeine, spicy foods, tobacco and alcohol.

Practice taking slow, deep breaths when you feel a hot flash coming on, or try relaxing activities like yoga or meditation.

Incontinence

Many men who have radiation, TURP (transurethral resection of the prostate) or radical prostatectomy will experience incontinence – the involuntary leakage of urine. The good news is that it's usually only temporary, and by 6 months after surgery most men will only lose a few drops of urine when lifting, sneezing or coughing (also called stress incontinence). Some men may also experience urge incontinence (also called overactive bladder) – leakage associated with a strong, sudden urge to urinate.



Tips for managing incontinence

Incontinence can make you feel self-conscious and embarrassed, leading to a decreased enjoyment of life. If you're much older, it can also increase your risk of falling as you rush to the toilet. But there are many lifestyle changes you can make to minimize its impact on you as you heal:

- Manage your liquid intake. Try to avoid alcohol, caffeine, carbonated and sweet drinks.
- Schedule regular trips to the bathroom every few hours, and train your bladder by gradually increasing the time.
- Work out your pelvic floor muscles (which help hold in urine) with [Kegel exercises](#). Your doctor can give you advice on how to get started. Many patients benefit from coaching for these exercises from a physiotherapist specialized in this area.



Work with your healthcare team

In addition to lifestyle modifications, there are a few ways your healthcare team can further help you get incontinence under control:

- Medications that reduce bladder irritability, decrease bladder spasms or improve bladder emptying.
- Surgical procedures to eliminate blockages in the urethra.
- Implants to help close off the flow of urine.

Your nutritional needs

The importance of healthy eating

Good nutrition is important at every stage of your prostate cancer journey. Clinical research suggests that a heart-healthy diet can lead to a better prognosis, while also protecting your heart health. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle – through diet and physical activity – can set you up for success by improving your energy, strength and overall health.

Following the [Canadian food guide](#) can help:

- Meet your vitamin, mineral and other nutrient needs
- Reduce your risk for heart disease
- Contribute to your overall health and energy

This guide shows how many servings of each food group men ages 51+ should aim to consume per day. Do not hesitate to speak to a dietitian or to a nutritionist and do not take supplements or natural products without talking to your doctor.

Servings for men



7-9
SERVINGS

- Aim to eat at least one dark green and orange vegetable per day. Romaine lettuce, spinach and broccoli are examples of dark green vegetables. Sweet potatoes, carrots and squash work well as orange vegetables.
- Look for fruit and vegetables that are steamed, baked or stir-fried – and avoid those that are deep fried. It's best to choose vegetables and fruits that are not prepared with lots of added salt, fat or sugar.
- Choose whole fruits and vegetables more often than juice, to meet your daily servings goal.



7
SERVINGS

- Whole-grain products should make up at least half of your daily grain product servings. Look for whole grain options such as barley, brown rice, quinoa, oats, wild rice, whole grain breads and pasta.
- Compare nutrition facts – and choose grain products lower in salt, fat and sugar.



3
SERVINGS

- Choose lower fat milk products. For products made from milk (such as cheeses or yogurts), compare nutrition facts and select options that are lower in fat.
- Drink milk every day. You should aim to drink 2 cups of milk per day to make sure you're getting enough vitamin D. Choose either skim, 1% or 2% milks, or fortified soy beverages.



3
SERVINGS

- Look for lean meats and alternatives that have limited added salt and fat. Remove skin on poultry and visible fat on meat. Bake, roast or poach prepared meats and alternatives. When choosing pre-packaged meats, compare nutrition facts and choose those with less sodium and fat.
- Eat at least 2 servings of fish per week. For example, you could choose to eat herring, char, mackerel, salmon or trout.

Making healthy choices

When choosing which foods to eat, it's generally best to eat a diet that is:

- **Plant-based**

Try to eat lots of vegetable and fruit servings. Beans, legumes and whole grains also work well.

- **Low in saturated fat**

Try reducing or eliminating your intake of high fat meats, milk and other dairy products. Try limiting your consumption of butter, mayonnaise and baked goods.

- **High in fiber**

Whole grain breads, oats, barley, quinoa and bulgar are all high-fiber choices.

- **Low in simple sugars**

Aim to limit your intake of sweets, baked goods, and other foods made with simple sugars and refined flours.

- **Low in salt**

Prepared foods can contain high levels of salt – so try to choose reduced-salt prepared meals, canned soups, snacks (unsalted or lightly salted nuts and chips) and condiments (reduced sodium soy sauce and ketchup). Using salt substitutes and using more herbs and spices while cooking can also help provide flavor without the added salt.



Tips for eating well

These tips can help you keep your body well-fueled:

- **Indulge in healthy snacks**

Eat smaller, more frequent snacks, every few hours, throughout the day.

- **Eat more protein**

Protein is important to help your cells grow and repair themselves. Try to eat more fish, poultry, lean red meat, eggs, dairy products and nuts.

- **Drink more water**

Staying hydrated helps maintain energy levels, which is particularly important during treatment when you might feel more tired than usual. You should aim to drink more water when you're out in hot weather, or involved in physical activity.

- **Consider supplements**

Different varieties of milkshakes, bars or powders are available at most pharmacies, and can be useful sources of protein and calories when you're on the go or simply don't have the time or energy to prepare a meal for yourself.



Work with your healthcare team

Since every case is different, your healthcare team may have specific guidance about what you should and shouldn't eat. Seeking advice from a dietitian can also help you develop meal plans tailored to your individual needs.



Your activities

Staying active during treatment: building strength for the journey ahead

It's completely natural to feel like resting more and exercising less during cancer treatment. However, staying active can be one of the best things you do for your body and mind. Even light, regular movement can provide a wealth of benefits to support you through this challenging time:

- **Energy for when you need it:** staying active helps your body build and conserve energy, making it available for moments when you need it most during treatment.
- **Improved mood and reduced stress:** exercise releases feel-good endorphins that lift your mood and help combat stress and anxiety.
- **Increased strength and appetite:** physical activity keeps your muscles strong and can stimulate your appetite, which is crucial for maintaining proper nutrition.
- **Better sleep and side effect management:** staying active helps regulate your sleep patterns and can alleviate treatment side effects like fatigue, nausea, and constipation.

Maintaining a healthy body weight through physical activity can also improve your ability to tolerate



cancer treatments and manage their side effects. Cardiovascular exercises, such as walking, cycling, or swimming, can boost heart health, improve endurance, and help regulate weight by burning calories. Resistance training, such as lifting weights or using resistance bands, helps build and maintain muscle mass, strengthen bones, and improve overall stability. Whether it's a gentle walk, a yoga session, or strength exercises tailored to your ability, every step and effort contributes to your well-being.

Ways to get moving

Each person's needs for an exercise program will be unique, and you should always talk to your doctor before starting or changing your exercise program. However, in general you should aim to maintain endurance, strength and flexibility so that you can continue to do the things that you want to do.



Work with your healthcare team

Cancer treatment can put you at higher risk of injury and infection, so not every activity will be right for you. You may also speak to a physiotherapist about specific exercises you can do, depending on the types of treatment (e.g. surgery) you've had. Your health care team can help you find the right level of activity tailored to your needs and abilities.

Staying active doesn't mean pushing your limits—it means giving your body the tools it needs to feel its best, even on the toughest days.



Your mental health

Recognizing changes in your mood

Cancer treatment, and especially an advanced prostate cancer diagnosis, are stressful and life-changing events. It's normal to feel anxious, nervous and/or depressed.

Some of the symptoms of anxiety and stress include:

- Excessive worrying, or restlessness
- Trouble sleeping, tiredness and exhaustion, or excessive sleeping
- Muscle tension
- Fast heartbeat, trembling, chest tightness, high blood pressure, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath
- Trouble concentrating, irritability or impatience

Some of the symptoms of depression can include:

- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness, anger, irritability or frustration
- Problems with memory, concentration, confusion or personality changes
- Sleep problems
- Losing interest in going out and socializing
- Suicidal thoughts

If you find that your symptoms are lasting most of the day, every day, for more than two weeks, you should talk to your medical team or speak to a nurse at PROCURE.



Tips for managing your mood

Some people feel less anxious knowing everything about their cancer treatment, while others get stressed out by all the details. Figure out where you're most comfortable to help control treatment-related anxiety.



Other tips can also include:

■ Talk it out

Choose someone with whom you can open up. Sometimes all it takes is one conversation to start feeling better.

■ Surround yourself with positivity

Whether it's people, events or pets, surround yourself with the things that make you happiest and the activities you enjoy.

■ Eat well and be active

A healthy diet helps maintain proper nutrition, and exercise releases natural mood-boosters called endorphins.

■ Cut down on caffeine

As part of a healthy diet, watch how much caffeine (a stimulant) you consume in drinks like coffee, tea or cola. You can easily start cutting back by switching to a decaffeinated version of the same drink.



Work with your healthcare team

It's very important to keep your healthcare team updated on your mood as you progress through your cancer journey. Open and honest communication about how you're feeling is key to them being able to help you.

The importance of your physical and emotional well-being

By looking after your own mental, emotional and physical well-being, you'll be better equipped to deal with the changes that come from living with advanced cancer and its treatment. The role you play in looking after yourself is just as important as any medicine or treatment.

Chances are you'll have many questions

Being prepared with questions when meeting your doctor can greatly enhance the quality of your visit and help you feel more in control of your healthcare. A list of questions ensures that you cover all the important topics, such as your diagnosis, treatment options, or managing side effects, while fostering a productive conversation and helping you retain key information.

This proactive approach also strengthens the doctor-patient relationship, ensuring your concerns are heard and addressed. Additionally, it can reduce anxiety, providing clarity and confidence as you navigate your treatment journey, especially in the face of uncertainty or complex decisions.

Questions you can ask your medical team

Diagnosis and prognosis:

- What stage is my cancer, and what does that mean for my treatment options and prognosis?
- How will you monitor my progress during treatment, and how often will I need follow-up visits?

Treatment options:

- What are my treatment options, and how do they compare in terms of effectiveness, side effects, and recovery time?
- How will this treatment impact my daily life and my ability to work or engage in other activities?
- Are there any new treatments or clinical trials I might be eligible for?

Side effects and support:

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment, and how can they be managed?
- What can I do ahead of time to improve my recovery and maybe reduce side effects?
- How can I stay active and maintain my energy levels during treatment?
- Will I need ongoing follow-up care after my initial treatment ends?