Know How to Recognize Prostate Cancer Early On

by RIANNE FRE

Prostate Cancer Symptoms to Be Aware Of

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer diagnosed in men worldwide. According to the World Cancer Research Fund, more than 1,200,000 new cases have been diagnosed in 2018 alone.

The good news is progress has been made. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. For instance, stage one prostate cancer is curable. However, it must be caught early in order to be treated properly.

Knowing the risk factors, preventive measures, and identifying the condition are key to being on the top of the situation.

Risk Factors of Prostate Cancer

Only some factors have been linked directly to the development of prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer rates increase with age. Therefore, men older than 50 should discuss the risks with their primary care physicians as early as possible. It is also known to run in families, so if a relative has had prostate cancer, you should get checked for it too.

Some genes have been linked to prostate cancer, and BRCA gene carriers have been shown to suffer more often from the condition than non-carriers. Patients with chronic prostatitis, which in its turn can be caused by sexually transmitted diseases or other inflammatory conditions, should also be alert.

Although all these factors serve for raising an alarm, all men are at risk for developing prostate cancer. Therefore, prevention plays a bigger role than identifying a risk population.

Prostate Cancer Symptoms

Feeling like you can’t pee, or that your pants are too big, should be your leading indicators. Patients with frequent urinary urges and a weak stream, incontinence, pain during urination or at night time, accompanied by unintentional weight loss should be screened right away. These are some common prostate cancer symptoms.

The presence of blood in sperm or urine, or even erectile dysfunction, are also warnings given by your body that something might be out of order. Patients will also suffer from general oncological symptoms such as weakness, mainly caused by an associated anemia and a tendency to suffer from blood clots.

Patients with advanced prostate cancer, or with metastatic cancer, may also complain of bone pain or even suffer from fractures without adequate trauma. Behavior changes due to brain metastases are also not uncommon, as much as enlarged lymph nodes, shortness of breath, and coughing.

Preventative Measures

Digital rectal examination (DRE) remains a highly specific method for detecting prostate cancer and is recommended for men older than 50 years old. Testing for the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is also helpful. However, there are some limitations due to false-positive results.

The US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) released a statement earlier this year that the decision to get a PSA test should be a shared one between doctor and patient, and that men older than 70 would not benefit from the screening.

The best and only way to confirm the diagnosis is to get a biopsy. Guidelines maintain that a biopsy should be performed when one of the following criteria are fulfilled: a DRE is positive, PSA is elevated (over 4 ng/ml) in a single test, or PSA values have been increasing by 0.75 ng/ml per year.

There is evidence that medications belonging to the 5-alpha-reductase group, such as Finasteride and Dutasteride, reduce the risk of prostate cancer as much as 25 percent. These medications are used to shrink an enlarged prostate, the so-called benign prostate hyperplasia, and to alleviate symptoms (especially frequent urinary urges). They may also be prescribed to halt scalp hair loss in men.

However, more research is required to create precise guidelines in this direction, since the medication itself is not free from side-effects. The side-effects range from loss of libido to sexual dysfunction.

Receiving a Prostate Cancer Diagnosis

After receiving biopsy results, some diagnostic measures need to be done to search for possible metastasis and determine the exact stage of the disease. Your doctor will order imaging scans and repeat PSA tests to see the progression in dynamics.

A baseline value is extremely important for comparison in other time points while you are receiving or have finished receiving treatment. Early prostate cancer requires surgery with the removal of the gland itself, and all further stages may need to be treated with either radiotherapy or chemotherapy, and sometimes the combination of both.

All patients that have received treatment are recommended to go through rehabilitation after surgery, and radiotherapy or chemotherapy since all these methods carry their own risks to the patient’s everyday life. Follow-up is required every three months, and often consists of only PSA testing.

The Bottom Line...

The fight against prostate cancer begins with communication between doctors and their patients. If you’re over 50, you should speak with your doctor about the screening process.

Remember: the earlier prostate cancer is detected, the better your chances of fighting it. As it advances, though, resources for treatment become limited. If you’ve experienced any prostate cancer symptoms, make sure to consult your doctor.