

Prostate Cancer: Risk Factors



What is a risk factor?

A risk factor is anything that may increase your chance of having a disease. Risk factors for a certain type of cancer might include smoking, diet, family history, or many other things. The exact cause of someone's cancer may not be known. But risk factors can make it more likely for a person to have cancer.

Things you should know about risk factors for cancer:

- Risk factors can increase a person's risk, but they don't always cause the disease.
- Some people with one or more risk factors never develop cancer. Other people with cancer have no known risk factors.
- Some risk factors are very well-known. But there's ongoing research about risk factors for many types of cancer.

Some risk factors, such as family history and age, may not be in your control. But others may be things you can change. Knowing about risk factors can help you make choices that might help lower your risk. For instance, if an unhealthy diet is a risk factor, you may choose to eat healthy foods. If excess weight is a risk factor, you can talk with your healthcare provider about how to lose weight.

Risk factors for prostate cancer

Risk factors for prostate cancer include:

- **Gender.** Only men are at risk.
- **Age.** Men ages 50 and older are at higher risk. Most prostate cancers are found in men older than age 65.
- **Race.** Prostate cancer is more common in African-American and Caribbean men of African ancestry than men of any other race. And it tends to happen when these men are younger. It's less common in Asian-American and Hispanic men than in non-Hispanic white men.
- **Family history of prostate cancer.** Having a father or brother with prostate cancer greatly raises a man's risk for the disease. The risk is even higher if more than one family member has the cancer, especially if at a young age.
- **Chemical exposures.** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says that men who were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War are at higher risk for prostate cancer.
- **Genes.** Men with certain inherited gene changes are at higher risk for prostate cancer. But only a small amount of prostate cancers are strongly linked to gene changes.

What are your risk factors?

Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk factors for prostate cancer and what you can do about them.

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