

# *Your Health Reference Sheet*

## *Topic: Prostate Cancer*

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Every year, 218,000 men in the United States (US) are diagnosed with prostate cancer. Most of them, when diagnosed, are under the terrifying impression that they've just been handed a death sentence. They don't realize that this form of cancer is different from other cancers. In reality, only about one out of seven men with this disease—perhaps 15 percent—are truly at risk of it being life threatening, and only 3 percent in the US will die from it. Yet, even knowing this, when a man hears the words, "You have prostate cancer," the shock leaves him wondering if he'll lose his sexual functioning, if he'll have to deal with incontinence, or if he'll be able to continue living a normal, healthy life.

The fear around prostate cancer is understandable if you look at what a man is confronted with when he's diagnosed. He's confronted with conflicting opinions, partial or conflicting information, and doctors who have a penchant for surgery. As a matter of fact, there was a time when this "gold standard" surgical treatment was considered the only option available to ensure a man's life could be spared from this life-threatening disease. Fortunately, that thinking is now passé thanks to new research, which shows that there's an indolent form of the disease that can be safely monitored without immediate treatment. In fact, this form shouldn't even be called cancer. Instead, it should be referred to as a *chronic condition*. What this new research has changed is how prostate cancer is viewed and treated. It's showing that the old standard surgical approach and the one-size-fits-all approach are both harmful and obsolete. It's offering men new options on how to deal with it, treat it, and live with it while still preserving their quality of life. It's offering them hope.

While prostate cancer is incredibly common, it's rarely seen before the age of 50 and is most often diagnosed between the ages of 65 and 75. In fact, most studies show that men over 70 years old have at least traces of it. Men with a family history of prostate cancer are three times more likely to die of it than is the general population; and for reasons unknown, African American men have the greatest incidences of prostate cancer in the world and the highest death rates from the disease. Conversely, Asian men have the lowest rates of prostate cancer. The reason for this lower risk factor appears to be associated with their diet.

### **General Description**

The prostate gland helps in the production of semen, the thick fluid that carries sperm cells. This walnut-sized gland is located beneath a man's bladder and surrounds the upper

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