

Fighting Back

Mercy Offers Comprehensive Prostate Cancer Services

With one in every six men facing a diagnosis of prostate cancer in his lifetime, it's clear that the prostate – the walnut-sized gland that aids the male reproductive system – packs a big punch.

The good news is only one in 35 of them will die from it. That's because men are being diagnosed early and treatment options continue to be refined. In some cases, multiple treatments are used to ensure the best chances for recovery. Here are the treatment choices—all available at Mercy Cancer Centers.

Surgery

"Ideally, surgery is for men with an expected life span of more than a decade," says Christopher E. Ramsey, M.D., a board-certified urologist with Urology Consultants of Knoxville. "Surgery offers the best long-term survival." There are four basic types of surgery to remove the prostate:

Retropubic prostatectomy. An incision is made from the belly button to the pubic bone. This is the most common radical prostatectomy and is typically the No. 1 choice if the surgeon wants to investigate the lymph nodes.

Perineal prostatectomy. The prostate is removed through a U-shaped incision under the scrotum. Because this surgery utilizes a shorter incision than the retropubic version, recovery is quicker.

Laparoscopic and robotic prostatectomies. Both minimally invasive procedures make multiple tiny incisions in the abdomen. The surgeon uses instruments, a scope and a video monitor to navigate inside the body and remove the prostate. In the robotic method, the surgeon controls instruments using robotic arms and a 3-D viewing system. These procedures mean a faster recovery. (Dr. Ramsey has performed more than 300 robotic prostatectomies at St. Mary's Medical Center.)

Radiation Treatment

"Radiation therapy is just as effective as surgery for early stage prostate cancer. It is the treatment of choice for men with more advanced disease," says Nilesh S. Patel, M.D., a board-certified radiation oncologist with Premier Radiation Oncology

Services at Mercy Cancer Centers. There are two types of radiation therapy for prostate cancer:

External beam treatment.

High-energy X-ray beams target cancerous areas. In recent years, intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) has replaced other methods. With IMRT, precise microbeams are used with almost no leakage of radiation into surrounding healthy tissue. "It's a viable option for people with early as well as advanced-stage prostate cancer," Dr. Patel says.

Interstitial treatment (brachytherapy). Radioactive "seeds" the size of rice grains are implanted in the affected area. The seeds emit radiation in regulated doses over time, killing cancerous cells. This method, according to Dr. Patel, is ideal for men with localized prostate cancer.

Hormone Therapy

This method can shrink the prostate cancer in advance of surgery or radiation treatment for better results. Typically, this treatment means a lifelong commitment to injections or pills—otherwise, testosterone levels will begin to increase on their own.

"The primary use of hormone therapy is to stop cancer growth," Dr. Ramsey says. "The majority of prostate cancers are dependent on testosterone for their growth—it's their fuel. If you eliminate the testosterone, the cancers will stop growing."

Man to Man

Talk with your doctor about prostate cancer prevention and detection. To learn more about treatment options, visit www.mercy.com.



Calling All Men!

Join us to learn about prostate cancer risk factors, symptoms and the latest treatments at a free educational and screening program in your community.

Thursday, September 17

St. Mary's Medical Center North

Thursday, September 24

Castleton's Regency Ballroom - sponsored by St. Mary's Medical Center of Campbell County

Monday, September 28

St. Mary's Jefferson Memorial Hospital

Thursday, October 1

Baptist Hospital West

PSA screenings: 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Lunch and educational program: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To learn more, visit www.mercy.com.

Knowledge Is Power

Join millions learning about prostate cancer

This month, Mercy Health Partners is joining the da Vinci® Surgery Awareness Initiative, supporting the Lance Armstrong Foundation. The goal of this national campaign is to educate people about prostate cancer—how it is detected, what causes it, and how it is commonly treated.

So, what is prostate cancer? It's a disease in which cancer cells form in tissues of the prostate—a gland in the male reproductive system located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. The causes are largely unknown, but the chance of developing it increases after age 50. Close relatives of men who had prostate cancer are more likely to be affected. Ethnicity can also play a role. Men of African heritage are at highest risk, while men of Asian descent are at lowest risk. Prostate cancer is typically found during a man's annual PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test.

Remember, knowledge is power. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones to learn more. Visit www.davincisurgery.com/awarenessinitiative for more information.

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Q&A

With **Jessica M. Ivey, M.D.**
Board-Certified Internal Medicine Physician
West Hills Family Practice

Q. There's been so much in the news lately about influenza and the H1N1 virus. I'm wondering what I can do to help protect my family.

A. There are many things you can do to prevent the spread of influenza and to treat symptoms should you or a family member contract either the seasonal flu or H1N1—the newest influenza strain.

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory virus that attacks the body with uncomfortable symptoms. It typically begins with sudden onset of a high fever (<101° F), chills, aches, fatigue and dry cough. Some people also have a sore throat, runny nose and gastrointestinal symptoms. Most recover fully within 7-10 days.

The flu is spread from person-to-person through droplets from the nose and throat of infected people. Unfortunately, people can spread influenza before they realize they have it. Persons with the flu should avoid contact with others until 24 hours after fever is gone; wash hands frequently; and cough into a tissue or the crook of the elbow.

Since viruses are not killed by antibiotics, penicillin and similar medicines will not alleviate the illness. Instead, over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen, ibuprofen and cough suppressants are used to treat the symptoms. Antiviral medications may slightly decrease the length and severity of the illness.

Flu shots and nasal-spray vaccinations for seasonal flu are very effective against certain flu strains. An H1N1 vaccine is also being developed and should be available next month. I encourage anyone wishing to prevent the flu to be vaccinated, especially if you have a chronic medical condition such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

