

## Wellness Articles

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An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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## What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the abnormal growth of cells in a man's prostate gland. The prostate sits just below the bladder. It makes part of the fluid for semen. In young men, the prostate is about the size of a walnut. As men age, the prostate usually grows larger.

Prostate cancer is common in men older than 65. It usually grows slowly and can take years to grow large enough to cause any problems. As with other cancers, treatment for prostate cancer works best when the cancer is found early. Often, prostate cancer that has spread responds to treatment. Experts don't know what causes prostate cancer, but they believe that your age, family history (genetics), and race affect your chances of getting it.

### What are the symptoms?

Prostate cancer usually doesn't cause symptoms in its early stages. Most men don't know they have it until it is found during a regular medical examination.

When problems are noticed, they are most often problems with urinating. But these same symptoms can also be caused by an enlarged prostate. An enlarged prostate is common in older men. See your doctor for a checkup if:

- You have urinary problems, such as:
  - Not being able to urinate at all.
  - Having a hard time starting or stopping the flow of urine.
  - Having to urinate often, especially at night.
  - Having pain or burning during urination.
- You have difficulty having an erection.



- You have blood in your urine or semen.
- You have deep and frequent pain in your lower back, belly, hip, or pelvis.