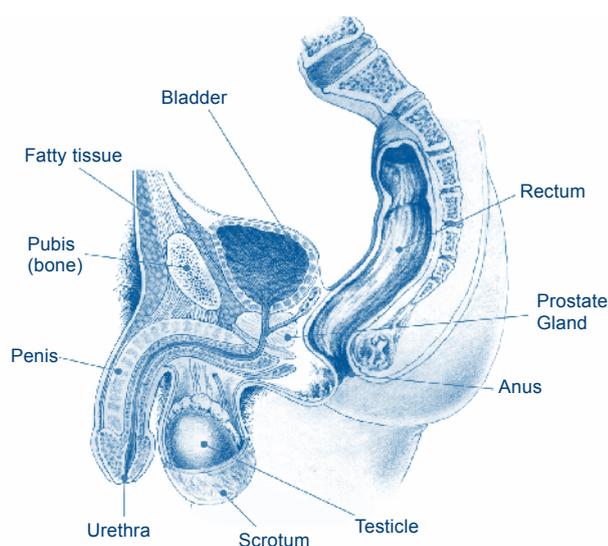




## How common is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer occurs mainly in men over 60, and is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in New Zealand men, aged 45 and over. Around 3,000 men are diagnosed annually.



*The male reproductive system*

## The prostate

The prostate is a small gland about four centimetres across, that sits below the bladder and surrounds the top part of the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder, and semen from the sex glands to the outside of the body via the penis).

## What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is a cancer of the prostate gland. Early prostate cancers are contained within the prostate gland and are called localised cancers.

## What to look for

Prostate cancer that hasn't spread to other parts of the body usually causes no symptoms. Many men over 50 have urinary symptoms, such as:

- passing urine more frequently
- difficulty urinating – starting or stopping
- poor flow of urine, and
- getting up at night more frequently to urinate.

These symptoms are usually due to pressure on the urethra from an enlarged prostate (benign – not cancerous). It is important to have all symptoms checked by a doctor to exclude a cancer.

## Tests for prostate cancer

- PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test.
- Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) The doctor puts a gloved finger into your rectum (bottom) and feels the prostate through the rectal wall.
- Ultrasound examination and biopsy: a small needle is directed into the prostate guided by an ultrasound probe in the rectum. (This is called transrectal ultrasound or TRUS.)

## Treatments for prostate cancer

Treatments may include surgery, radiation treatment, hormone therapy, or a combination of these. For some older men, a programme of active surveillance (regular checks) may be recommended.

## Reducing your risk of prostate cancer

The causes of prostate cancer are not fully understood. Regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight and eating less red meat may lower your risk of prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is more common if there is a family history.

## Prostate screening

Many men ask if they should be routinely tested (screened) for prostate cancer if they don't have any symptoms.

Screening tests for prostate cancer include blood (PSA) tests and rectal examinations.

The Cancer Society recommends that men who are thinking about being tested should have information about the possible benefits and risks to enable them to make up their minds. Discuss this with your doctor.