Prostate Problems and Prostate Cancer

Signs and symptoms of prostate problems
Visit your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you:
• are unable to urinate
• need to go to the bathroom more often, especially at night
• have difficulty starting or stopping the stream of urine
• have a weak stream of urine
• feel pain or burning when you urinate
• have blood in the urine
• have painful discharge of semen (ejaculation) during sex
• feel pain in the lower back, pelvis or upper thighs that does not go away

What are some prostate problems other than cancer?
• Infections (prostatitis) affect men of all ages. Bacteria from infections in the urinary tract may cause this condition.
• Inflammation or congestion may be due to aging or a buildup of prostate fluid in the prostate gland.
• Enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hypertrophy, or BPH) is quite common in older men. Without proper treatment, an enlarged prostate sometimes can interfere with a normal lifestyle and sometimes can cause severe bladder or kidney damage.

Who is at a greater risk for getting prostate cancer?
• men over 50
• with a father or brother who had prostate cancer
• who are African-American
How is prostate cancer detected?

Two quick and easy tests together can help doctors decide who needs a biopsy, which increases the likelihood of diagnosing and finding prostate cancer early, when it is more treatable.

• Rectal exam – Your doctor places a gloved finger in the rectum and feels the prostate, checking its size and shape. A prostate with a hard spot may indicate cancer.

• Prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test – This measures the level of a protein produced by the prostate. A high PSA level could be a sign of an enlarged prostate or inflammation of the prostate, or it may indicate the presence of cancer.

How is prostate cancer treated?

Treatment is based on how aggressive the cancer is and how far it has spread. The most common forms of treatment today are:

• Careful observation – If the cancer is not aggressive or the patient is older or in poor overall health.

• Surgery – Including radical prostatectomy (removal of the entire prostate) or cryotherapy (killing cancer cells through deep freezing). Minimally invasive radical prostatectomy techniques offer the potential of less blood loss and more rapid convalescence. These include laparoscopic prostatectomy and robotically assisted laparoscopic radical prostatectomy, a.k.a. da Vinci® prostatectomy.

• Radiation therapy – Uses high-energy forms of X-rays to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may be delivered to the prostate by an external radiation machine or by radioactive seeds (brachytherapy) placed directly into the prostate gland.

• Hormone therapy – Slows the growth of prostate cancer and is most often used when the cancer has spread beyond the prostate gland. These drug treatments are also sometimes used along with other treatments to shrink the prostate and improve the results.

Screenings are important in detecting prostate cancer in its earliest stage when it is more treatable. Schedule yours today.

Be sure to have prostate screening examinations annually beginning at age 40 or as early as 35 if you are an African American and/or have a family history of prostate cancer.

Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals’ Department of Urology is one of the oldest in the United States, with internationally recognized experts in all major fields of urology, including prostate health. Jefferson urologists were the first in the region to perform minimally invasive laparoscopic prostatectomy. The Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson was first in the Delaware Valley to employ a multidisciplinary approach to treating prostate cancer. For an appointment with a Jefferson physician, call 1-800-JEFF-NOW. For more information, visit www.jeffersonhospital.org/prostatecancer.