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Prostate Cancer

FOR

DUMMIES[®]



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with Christine Adamec

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Prostate Cancer FOR **DUMMIES®**

**by Paul H. Lange, MD,
with Christine Adamec**



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Prostate Cancer For Dummies®

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
www.wiley.com

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Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2003101850

ISBN: 0-7645-1974-3

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8



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Screening and Testing

Prostate cancer is often curable when diagnosed and treated early (before it spreads). Starting at age 50 (or sooner, if you have a history of prostate cancer in your family), the following tests should be a part of your annual physical exam:

- ✓ **Digital rectal examination (or DRE):** The doctor inserts his lubricated finger into your rectum to feel for lumps on the prostate, which is normally smooth. Nobody likes this test but it can be a life saver.
- ✓ **Prostate specific antigen (PSA) test:** This blood test shows if you have elevated levels of PSA, which may indicate cancer is present.

If your digital rectal exam, PSA, or other indicators (such as urinary symptoms) point to the possibility of prostate cancer, you'll see a urologist, who will order some or all of the following tests. Use this list to keep straight the name and purpose of each test:

- ✓ **A biopsy:** The doctor will remove tissue samples from your prostate to be checked for cancer. You can't know if you have cancer until a biopsy is done.
- ✓ **An ultrasound:** This test uses sound waves to check for the presence of tumors. The doctor may use an external ultrasound in addition to the internal ultrasound (transrectal probe) used as part of the biopsy.
- ✓ **A bone scan:** Some doctors also perform a bone scan in addition to a biopsy, to check whether cancer may have spread to the bones.

Asking Your Doctor Questions

If you're diagnosed with prostate cancer, be sure to ask your doctor the following questions (or have a friend or family member ask):

- ✓ "What treatments may be best for me and why?"
- ✓ "How much time can I take to decide on a treatment?"
- ✓ "Is nerve-sparing surgery an option for me, so that I can have a good chance of staying sexually potent?" (assuming surgery is recommended).
- ✓ "Should I have radioactive seeds implanted, external radiation treatments, or both?" (assuming radiation treatments are recommended).
- ✓ "Do I need to consult with other doctors? If so, what kind of doctors should I see and why?"

Finding a Good Specialist

If your primary care doctor says you need to see a specialist (in most cases, a urologist) because you may have prostate cancer, use the following tips to find a qualified specialist in your area:

- ✓ Ask your doctor for a referral.
- ✓ Talk to other people who've undergone treatment for prostate cancer, in your family and at work.
- ✓ Ask your dentist, your chiropractor, and others in the general health care field for recommendations of doctors.
- ✓ Check out information about physicians on the Internet. (Read how in Chapter 6.)



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Dealing with Treatment Side Effects

Nearly all men worry about side effects caused by prostate cancer treatments. To help calm your fears, here's a list of possible treatment side effects and good news about how your doctor can help you control them.

- ✓ **Impotence:** If your doctor recommends prostatectomy surgery, ask him if nerve-sparing surgery, which can often preserve the ability to have erections, is an option for you. Also, if you do experience impotency after treatment, talk to your doctor about good solutions (such as Viagra, vacuum pumps, injections, and penile implants).
- ✓ **Incontinence:** Your doctor can prescribe drugs that will relieve you of the constant feeling that you have to go — right now! You can also practice bladder exercises such as Kegels, which strengthen your bladder muscle. If the problem is severe, surgery to implant an artificial bladder sphincter can help resolve it and get you urinating normally again.
- ✓ **Fatigue:** If the problem is fatigue (and often, it is!) make sure you get at least seven hours of sleep a night. Also, a simple exercise regimen or regular walks can counteract tiredness. If fatigue stems from cancer-fighting drugs, ask your doctor about medications to combat your fatigue.
- ✓ **Irritability, mood swings, and depression:** Overcome emotional problems with therapy and support groups. Often your doctor can prescribe medications that can help.

Tips for Partners

You may feel like your world is imploding when you learn your loved one has cancer. Yes, the diagnosis is scary for you to hear, but your partner needs you as he struggles with prostate cancer.

- ✓ Be supportive. Let your partner know that you hate the cancer, too, and that you're going to be there to help him fight it.
- ✓ Offer to go with your partner to see the doctor. If he is still upset over the diagnosis, he may miss half (or more) of what the doctor says. If you go to the doctor with him, you can take notes and ask a few questions.
- ✓ Realize that your partner will likely have at least a few weeks (if not months) before having to decide on a treatment. Take that time to help him gather information about treatments, support groups, and specialists.
- ✓ Convince your partner to take timeout from thinking about prostate cancer. Take in a football game or movie, walk in the park, or do other activities you enjoy together. Replenish your mental energies so that you'll be better prepared to tackle this prostate cancer problem.
- ✓ Take some time out just for you — go to a movie or eat out with friends. Don't devote all your time to thinking about resolving your partner's prostate cancer problem. You'll burn yourself out, and that won't help him or you.

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Cancer***
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About the Authors

Paul H. Lange, MD, a prostate cancer survivor himself, is an internationally renowned surgeon and a leader of cutting-edge research on urological malignancies, including prostate cancer. He is a medical school professor and chairman of the department of urology at the University of Washington in Seattle. Dr. Lange is also co-director of the Genitourinary Tumor Laboratory at the University of Washington.

Dr. Lange is the principal investigator of several large multi-disciplinary research grants on prostate cancer, including a prestigious SPOR (special programs in research excellence) grant from the National Institutes of Health. He is also the leader of an international clinical trial investigating whether radical prostatectomy or brachytherapy provides a better outcome for men with prostate cancer.

Dr. Lange has been on the editorial boards of many medical journals, including the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Urology*, *Investigative Urology*, *Urologic Oncology*, and *Contemporary Urology*. He's a recipient of the Lattimer Medal from the American Urological Association for outstanding contributions to urology, and is a past president of the national Society of Urologic Oncology. Dr. Lange has authored or coauthored hundreds of articles in medical journals and several medical books on cancer, including prostate cancer.

Dr. Lange is a member of the American Urological Association, the American Association of Genitourinary Surgeons, the Society of Urologic Oncology, the American College of Surgeons, The American Society of Clinical Oncology, the American Association of Cancer Research, and the American Medical Association.

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Dedication

Paul H. Lange, MD: This book is dedicated to my wife, Lucy Lange. Without her help and sacrifice, most of my career accomplishments would not have been possible.

Christine Adamec: This book is dedicated to my husband John Adamec, a prostate cancer survivor.

Authors' Acknowledgments

We want to acknowledge the assistance of Esther Gwinnell, MD, a psychiatrist in private practice in Portland, Oregon, and associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Oregon Health and Sciences University. In addition, we also thank Marie Mercer, reference librarian at the DeGroodt Public Library in Palm Bay, Florida, and Mary Jordan, interlibrary loan librarian at the Central Library Facility in Cocoa, Florida, for their research assistance. Thanks also to Alec Sohmer, Esq., an attorney from Brockton, Massachusetts, who assists people with Social Security disability claims.

Dr. Lange wishes to thank the following individuals for their expert advice on various sections in the book: William Ellis, MD, associate professor, department of urology, University of Washington in Seattle; Daniel Lin, MD, acting assistant professor, department of urology, University of Washington; R. Bruce Montgomery, MD, associate professor, department of medicine, division of oncology, University of Washington and VA Puget Sound HCS; Kenneth Russell, MD, professor, department of radiation oncology, Seattle Cancer Care Alliance; Paul Schellhammer, MD, professor of urology, Eastern Virginia Graduate School of Medicine, and and program director of the Virginia Prostate Center, Norfolk Virginia and Janet Stanford, PhD, research professor, department of epidemiology; Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington.

We also want to thank Denise Chmela-Gerdon for her hard work during the days, evenings, and weekends that she devoted to helping manage this project, as well as for her continuous enthusiasm and support. Denise was integral to the successful completion of this book.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Cartoons: Rich Tennant, www.the5thwave.com

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