

In the second article on prostate cancer Consultant Urologist at [Mater Private Network](#), GREG NASON, explains what men should do to stay ahead of the disease.

Prostate Cancer: What men need to know and why early intervention is key!

Since 2003, November aims to raise awareness of men's health for the month of November. Prostate cancer is the most common (non-cutaneous) cancer affecting men in Ireland, with one in seven Irish men developing the disease at some point in their lives. Despite its prevalence, prostate cancer is often diagnosed in asymptomatic men.

Around 4,000 cases are diagnosed annually (more than breast cancer, colon cancer, lung cancer), with most cases identified after a routine blood test called the Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test. Fortunately, when caught early, prostate cancer is highly treatable.

Managing Your Risk and PSA Testing The most common risks are age (97pc of prostate cancer presents in men over the age of 50) and a family history. Men with a father or brother who has had prostate cancer face an elevated risk - around one in four.

Other genetic factors are also established, with familial links to breast or ovarian cancer.

Early detection is key. A simple blood test (PSA) is the first step.

Unfortunately, unlike breast cancer, there is no national screening program for prostate cancer and PSA testing isn't included as part of standard blood tests so it's essential men within the range above speak with their GP about PSA testing, so they can guide them on the

advantages and disadvantages of checking a PSA test and make a shared decision.

If an initial test shows high PSA levels, a GP will often rule out other common conditions like urinary tract infections and repeat the test a few weeks later. Consistently age specific elevated PSA levels would then lead to a referral to a urologist for further diagnostic tests such as a non-invasive MRI scan and then potentially a prostate biopsy.

Treatment Options and Support

One of the main advantages of early detection is there are a wide range of treatments available, individualized to the cancer's stage, the

patient's age, and their overall health. For men with low-risk prostate cancer, surveillance is often recommended with no invasive treatment required.

Active surveillance allows men to avoid the side effects associated with more aggressive treatments while still monitoring the disease closely.

For men with more aggressive but localized prostate cancer both surgery (to remove the whole prostate) or radiation are excellent treatment modalities with curative intent.

Surgery is now performed robotically through small incisions in the abdomen as opposed to traditional open surgery. Robotic prostatectomy has been established in Ireland since 2006 and essentially the minimally invasive platform allows patients recover quicker and get back to normal activities.

Robotic surgery has advantages such as enhanced vision with magnification of tissues, the four working arms of the robot allow

better access into the male pelvis enabling more precise surgery with less tissue damage and less blood loss. Patients are in hospital for 1-2 nights post operatively. The two main side effects to surgery are a degree of urinary incontinence (which is usually temporary for most men) and a degree of erectile dysfunction. As no two cancer diagnoses are the same, the decision-making process for these treatment plans is individualized through a multi-disciplinary team and tailored to patients oncological and functional (quality of life) goals.

Awareness and proactive engagement in prostate health is critical. The Irish Cancer Society offers a wealth of information and resources, including support groups, informational sessions, and helplines, to guide men and their partners through what can be a challenging and vulnerable time.

For more information on treatment options available for prostate cancer, please visit www.materprivate.ie



GREG NASON