

SEPTEMBER IS PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN, CHCE

Director of Operations at Hoosier Uplands Home Health and Hospice

Prostate cancer usually occurs after age 65, and it is rare before 40. A man has a 1 in 6 chance of getting prostate cancer, and a 1 in 36 chance of dying from prostate cancer.

What can you do to increase your odds of finding prostate cancer at an early stage? You should get a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test, your doctor may also perform a digital rectal exam. You should begin talking to your doctor about prostate screening at 50, unless you are high risk. If you are high risk you should begin talks with your doctor at 45. If you have more than one close relative, father, brother or son, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer before 65, you should begin these talks at 40.

What should I report to my health care provider? Early prostate cancer usually has no symptoms, which is why the PSA is important. Some advanced stage prostate cancers may result in weakened or slowed urine stream, having to get up at night to urinate, blood in your urine, difficulty getting an erection or loss of bladder/bowel control. You may also have pain in your hips, back, chest or other areas, weakness or numbness in the legs or feet. Keep in mind that other diseases can mimic these symptoms, seek the opinion of an expert.

Who has an increased risk of prostate cancer? 2 out of 3 cancers occur in men over the age of 65, African-American men are 2 times likely to die of prostate cancer than white men, family history of prostate cancer, men who eat a diet high in red meat or fat and men who are obese.

How can I lower my risk of prostate cancer? Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and limit your intake of red meat and fat. Lose weight if you are obese. Increase physical activity. Speak with your doctor if you are high risk to see if medication may reduce your risk.

The ACS website was used when researching this article, www.cancer.org.