



# Men's Health Issue Not to be Ignored

BY ALISON BAILIN BATZ

## UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING PROSTATE CANCER

**WHEN IT COMES TO PROSTATE CANCER** and men, the statistics are sobering.

"Digging deeper, it is imperative to note that the majority of all prostate cancer – more than 70% – occurs in men age 65 and older," said Dr. Gregory Maggass, a prostate cancer specialist at Arizona Center for Cancer Care in Gilbert. "In fact, prostate cancer is almost completely nonexistent in men under the age of 40."

The good news for the guys is that most prostate cancer, if detected early, is completely treatable.

**Why Men?**

Simply put, only men get prostate cancer because only they have the prostate gland. It's an area fueled by

hormones with the focus of assisting the male reproductive system.

"Over time, a prostate gland cell or two may become abnormal," said Dr. Maggass. "If the abnormal cells continue to grow and replicate, they will begin to negatively impact healthy tissues, which leads to a cancer diagnosis."

### Why a rectal exam?

Unlike many other types of cancers, there are few if any symptoms of prostate cancer, especially in the early, treatable stages. But, there are screenings targeting early detection. The chief test, which should be done

once a year during a regular annual physical after age 50, is the digital rectal examination.

"Sure, it is uncomfortable, but it is critical in helping us detect prostate cancer as well as a litany of other issues including growths, pelvic pain, bleeding and even colorectal cancer," said Dr. Maggass.

Doctors also suggest a second critical screening involving the blood to test the prostate-specific antigen (PSA).

### Why do I need to understand my treatment options?

"If you or someone you love is diagnosed with prostate cancer, there are a variety of options for treatment," said Dr. Maggass.

Each should be explored thoroughly with a qualified physician to decide the best method for the patient. According to Dr. Maggass, these options include, but are not limited to:

- Active surveillance – essentially watchful waiting, this option may be best for those in very early stages or with very slow growing cancer

### According to the American Cancer Society:

- Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in American men.
- More than 240,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in 2012.
- More than 28,000 men will die of prostate cancer in 2012.
- One in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime.

- Prostatectomy – surgical removal of the entire prostate gland and some surrounding tissue

- Radiation Therapy – directed radioactive exposure that kills the cancerous cells and surrounding tissues

- Hormone Therapy – also known as androgen-deprivation

therapy or ADT; prostate cancer cell growth relies on the hormone testosterone as the main fuel, and ADT removes that fuel

- Chemotherapy – the use of chemicals that kill or halt the growth of cancer cells

"As science progresses, studies have demonstrated that radiation treatment – delivered externally and internally – is as effective in treating the disease as surgical removal of the prostate," said Dr. Maggass. "But, side effect effects can include bladder and bowel issues."

As a result, Dr. Maggass and nearly 100 medical centers throughout the country have adopted a new system called Calypso, which enables physicians to determine the exact location of the prostate in real-time during radiation therapy. Armed with this information, radiation to the surrounding healthy tissue can be avoided and side effects can be minimized. 202

For more information about prostate cancer, please visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

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