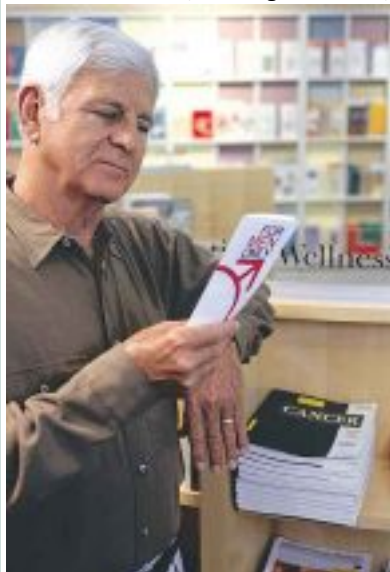


PROSTATE CANCER: common but treatable

By Greg Burt

The American Cancer Society estimates that nearly a quarter of a million American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year. One man in every six, they say, will be diagnosed with the disease at some point in his lifetime.

Prostate cancer, although common,



is one of the most treatable of cancers, especially when detected early. The process starts with a regular checkup, and a blood workup, which includes the well-known PSA test. If the possibility of cancer is indicated, a biopsy is generally recommended. If cancer is detected, the question then is how, or if, you treat it.

"Since screening has begun, mortality has decreased markedly. We're finding it earlier and we have better treatments. But the doctor needs to look at each case," said Dr. Eric Mitchnick, president of Integrated Medical Foundation and chair of the section of Urology at Huntington Hospital.

A man with an aggressive form of prostate cancer, who is otherwise healthy, Mitchnick said, will probably choose to be treated. On the other hand, one with a very slow-growing form of the disease may choose to simply live with it.

New guidelines from the American Urological Association (AUA), say the usefulness of the PSA test may have to be decided on a case-by-case basis for men in their late 50s and 60s. The group said that men aged 55 to 69 should talk to their doctors about the risks and benefits of PSA screening and make a decision based on their personal values and preferences.



Routinely having a PSA test is not recommended for men over 70 or any man with less than a 10- to 15-year life expectancy and for those under 40, according to the guidelines.

"The questions for the doctor,"

Mitchnick said, "are how do you know if this cancer is going to progress, be fatal, affect quality of life? Who is a patient that actually needs the treatment? Then you have to choose the treatment method that's going to be the least invasive, and still give good results." New technologies and new treatments are making it easier to answer those questions.

TREATMENT Options

Mitchnick said "the least invasive way we have now is external radiation or image-guided radiation therapy which is very precise. Seed implants are another way, but there is about a two month recovery phase. Surgery is another but there can be complications such as incontinence. Symptoms from external radiation are

much less: it's not debilitating, there may be occasional tiredness, but that's about all."

Urinary tract problems such as hesitancy, urgency, and frequency of urination can be prostate related, or not, Mitchnick said. "If you have any of these symptoms, you should find out what's going on and get screened for prostate cancer while you're at it. Other diseases and conditions can cause these same symptoms, so you shouldn't assume, get tested."

PREVENTIVE Measures

Nothing has been proven to prevent prostate cancer, but Dr. Mitchnick said that, generally speaking, a high fiber, low fat diet, antioxidants and a daily multi-vitamin may offer some protection.

Dr. Wayne Waltzer of the department of Urology at Stony Brook Medicine said that vitamins and supplements sold for the prevention of prostate cancer and other problems may be of some benefit, but none have been proven, and it's a case of let the buyer beware. "Omega -3 fatty acids have been linked to a reduced rate of prostate cancer," he said, "but it's not carved in stone." Trials with vitamin E and selenium were also inconclusive."



Before

After



Before

After



Before

After



Before

After

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Before

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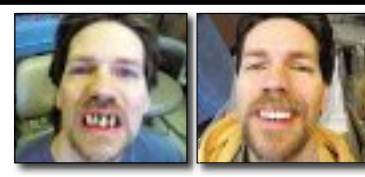
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