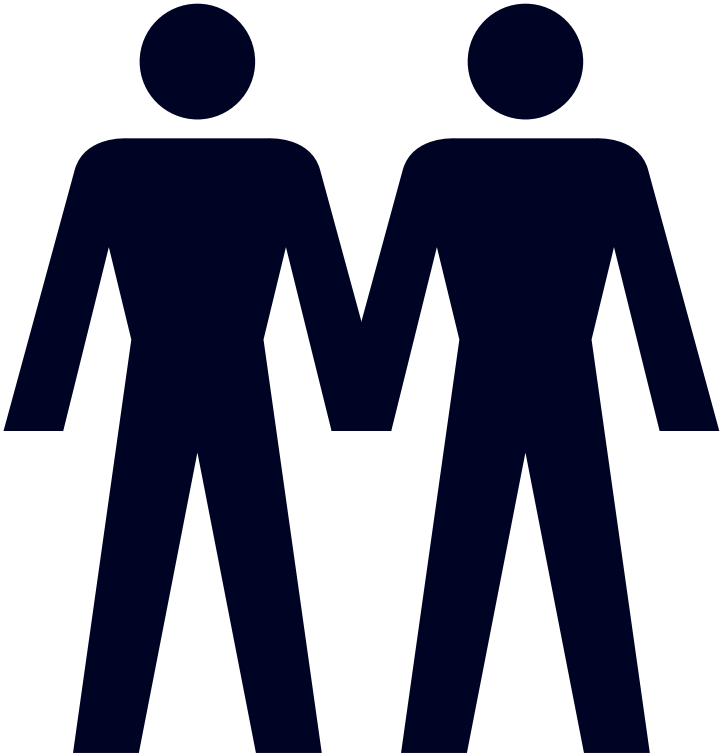


# Prostate facts for gay and bisexual men



**PROSTATE  
CANCER UK**

## About this booklet

This booklet is for gay and bisexual men, and men who have sex with men. In many ways, prostate cancer and other prostate problems are the same for men whatever their sexuality – gay, bisexual or heterosexual.


But if you are gay, bisexual or a man who has sex with men, you might have some specific questions or concerns. We provide information that may be more relevant to you. There's also information about the support available to you.

Everyone is different, so if the information here isn't what you're looking for, you should be able to find what you need in our Tool Kit fact sheets and other booklets. If you have any other questions or need more support speak to our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383.

The following symbols appear throughout the booklet to guide you to sources of further information:

 Prostate Cancer UK Specialist Nurses

 Prostate Cancer UK publications

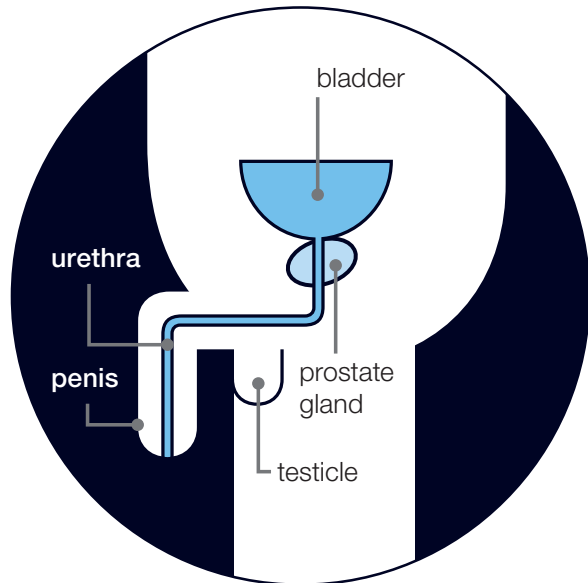
 Watch men tell their own stories in our online videos:  
[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)

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## What is the prostate?

Only men have a prostate gland. The prostate is usually the size and shape of a walnut and grows larger as you get older. It sits underneath the bladder and surrounds the urethra, which is the tube that men pee and ejaculate through. Its main job is to help make semen, which is the fluid that carries sperm.



## Prostate problems and prostate cancer

The three most common prostate problems are:

- an enlarged prostate – this is the most common prostate problem
- prostatitis – an inflammation or infection of the prostate
- prostate cancer.

For some men, problems urinating could be a sign that they have a prostate problem, usually an enlarged prostate. Or it might be an infection or inflammation of the prostate, called prostatitis. Early prostate cancer doesn't usually cause problems urinating.

Problems with urinating could also be caused by another health problem, such as diabetes, or by any medicines you are taking, such as anti-depressants.

If you have symptoms, get them checked out by your doctor.

There's no evidence that gay or bisexual men are more likely to get prostate cancer or other prostate problems. But prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK. About 1 in 8 men will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives.

You may be more likely to get prostate cancer if:

- you are aged 50 or over
- you are Black
- your father or brother has had it.

If you are more at risk of prostate cancer, or if you have symptoms such as problems peeing, you might want to get further advice or a check-up at your GP surgery.



Read more about prostate problems, symptoms and your risk of prostate cancer in our booklet, **Know your prostate: A guide to common prostate problems.**





## Testing for prostate cancer

There is no single test to diagnose prostate cancer, but there are a number of tests which can be used to see if you have a prostate problem. These include a blood test known as the PSA test, physical examination of your prostate (called a digital rectal examination or DRE), and a prostate biopsy.


 Read more about tests for prostate cancer in our Tool Kit fact sheet, **How prostate cancer is diagnosed**.

### The PSA test

The PSA test measures the total amount of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate. It's normal to have a small amount of PSA in your blood, and the amount rises as you get older. A raised PSA level may suggest you have a problem with your prostate, but not necessarily cancer.

A PSA test alone can't tell you whether you have prostate cancer, and there are pros and cons to having one. If you're thinking about having a PSA test, it's important to find out more about it first, so you know the facts before you decide.

Certain things might cause your PSA level to rise for just a short while – and make the test results misleading. This includes being the receptive partner (the 'bottom') during anal sex or stimulation of the prostate, so it might be wise to avoid this in the week before a PSA test.


 Find out more about the PSA test in our booklet, **Understanding the PSA test: A guide for men concerned about prostate problems**.

## Digital rectal examination (DRE)

The DRE is a common way of helping to diagnose a prostate problem. Your doctor or nurse will feel the prostate gland through the wall of the back passage (rectum).

The doctor or nurse will slide their finger into your back passage. They will wear gloves and put some gel on their finger to make it more comfortable.

This may be uncomfortable, and some men find it embarrassing but it will be over quickly.

Find out more about the DRE in our Tool Kit fact sheet,  
 **How prostate cancer is diagnosed.**

## Prostate biopsy

If your test results suggest you may have a problem with your prostate, your GP will refer you to a hospital specialist who will then decide if you need further tests, such as a biopsy. A prostate biopsy takes tiny pieces of the prostate to look at under a microscope for signs of cancer.

The biopsy involves having an ultrasound probe inserted into the rectum (back passage) to scan the prostate. A needle is then inserted through the wall of the back passage into the prostate using the ultrasound image as a guide.

There are some short-term effects of a biopsy. One side effect is blood in your semen – some men have a bit of blood, others have a lot. Your semen may look blood-stained. Wear a condom if you are having sex during this time.

If you are the receptive partner (“bottom”) during anal sex, ideally wait for around six weeks after a biopsy before having sex. Ask your doctor or nurse at the hospital for further advice. Read more about speaking with health professionals on page 19.

Read more about the biopsy in our Tool Kit fact sheet,  
 **How prostate cancer is diagnosed.**



**The results came back. From the physical examination of my prostate the doctor had found some lumps, and my PSA was raised.**

A personal experience

## Treatment for prostate cancer

Your treatment options will depend on whether your cancer is contained within the prostate gland (localised), has spread just outside of the prostate (locally advanced) or has spread to other parts of the body (advanced).

You may have a choice of treatments. Your doctor or nurse will explain all your treatment options, and help you to choose the right treatment for you.

Each treatment has its own pros and cons. Your personal preferences are very important – think about how the treatment and its side effects will fit into your life.

You might find it helpful to get support, information and advice before choosing a treatment. Speak to your doctor or nurse, or you can call our Specialist Nurses.



For more information about the different treatments for prostate cancer, read our **Tool Kit** fact sheets.



## Side effects of prostate cancer treatment

Depending on what treatment you have, side effects can include:

- problems with erections
- urinary problems (for example leaking urine)
- bowel problems
- tiredness.

You'll have your own reasons for choosing one treatment over another, including how side effects could affect your lifestyle. For example, if you are the receptive partner ('bottom') during anal sex and you're thinking about having radiotherapy, you might want to find out how radiotherapy can affect the bowel and the back passage.

Speak to your doctor or nurse about your treatment options and side effects. Think about letting them know about your sexuality and lifestyle so they know how treatment might impact on you, so they can give you specific information and support. You might also find it helpful to discuss your treatment options with your partner, family or friends.

Find out more about speaking to health professionals on page 19.

Read more about treatment side effects and ways to manage them in our **Tool Kit** fact sheets.






## Sexual side effects

Having treatment for prostate cancer can affect:

- how you feel about yourself sexually
- your desire to have sex (libido)
- your ability to get an erection (erectile function)
- your ability to ejaculate and have an orgasm
- your sexual satisfaction
- your fertility
- the appearance of your body
- your relationships.

 For more detailed information about the risk of sexual problems for each different prostate cancer treatment, read our **Tool Kit** fact sheets.

The way that sexual side effects affect you could depend on your approach to sex, sensuality and intimacy. Not all gay and bisexual men have anal sex – but if you do, then the impact of side effects will depend on whether you identify as a ‘top’, a ‘bottom’ or ‘versatile’.

## Experience of sex


If you have a partner or you are sexually active then coping with cancer and side effects may change your relationship and the way you have sex.

Your sex life is unlikely to be the same as it was before cancer – but you don’t have to give up on having closeness, pleasure or fun. Keeping some kind of physical closeness alive, in whatever ways possible, can protect or even improve your relationship.

If you are the receptive partner (‘bottom’) during anal sex a lot of the pleasure comes from the penis rubbing against the prostate, and for this reason it is often referred to as the male g-spot.

Some men who are the receptive partner during anal sex find that if they have surgery to remove their prostate (radical prostatectomy) or radiotherapy, their experience of sex changes.

With all sexual changes you may be able to find ways to work through this and find new ways of giving and receiving pleasure and keeping closeness or intimacy alive.

 Our booklet **Prostate cancer and your sex life** provides practical tips to help with your sex life, further information about sex therapy and specific information for partners.

You could also get advice about the impact on your sex life at a Genito-urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic or sexual health clinic. They know a lot about sexual issues, and may be able to advise about what can help.

## Watch Martin’s story

For one gay man’s experience of dealing with the impact of prostate cancer on sex and relationships.

## Erection problems

To be the active partner (the ‘top’) during anal sex you normally need a strong erection, so erection problems can be a particular issue. You could try using a constriction ring around your penis together with another treatment like tablets (such as Viagra®), to help keep your erection hard enough for anal sex.

There are also other treatments for erection problems such as vacuum pumps, injections and pellets.



Speak to your GP or doctor or nurse at the hospital to find out more about treatments for sexual problems. They might refer you to a specialist service such as an erectile dysfunction (ED) clinic.

Find out more about speaking to health professionals on page 19.

### Bowel problems and anal sensitivity

If you are the receptive partner ('bottom') during anal sex, then bowel problems after radiotherapy may be a particular issue. Some men also find that the skin inside their anus is more sensitive after radiotherapy.

If you are experiencing bowel problems or sensitivity in this area then wait until these issues have improved before trying anal play or sex. Although short-term problems in the back-passage usually settle-down within six weeks of finishing treatment, there can be some permanent changes in the anal canal.

It's wise to be cautious and perhaps less adventurous than you were before your treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse for further advice. Find out more about speaking with health professionals on page 19.

Use a condom and try extra lubrication once any sensitivity settles down. Use water soluble or silicone-based lubricants. Never use oil-based lubricants such as body lotions, massage oils, or Vaseline, as they can make the condom break.

Cleaning yourself before sex can make you feel more comfortable, but douching can irritate the lining of your back passage, making it more likely to get infections. So you may prefer to just clean the external area, rather than cleaning inside. The gay men's health charity GMFA provide more general advice about douching.



Find out more about managing bowel problems in our booklet, **Living with and after prostate cancer: A guide to physical, emotional and practical issues**. Read more about radiotherapy in our Tool Kit fact sheets, **External beam radiotherapy** and **Permanent seed brachytherapy**.



### Ejaculation and orgasm

After surgery for prostate cancer (radical prostatectomy) you will no longer be able to ejaculate semen, although you will still be able to have an orgasm. This sometimes also happens after radiotherapy. Some men say that this changes their experience of sex, but after time some men can adapt to it.



Read more about surgery in our Tool Kit fact sheet, **Surgery: radical prostatectomy**.



**I didn't realise how much significance as a gay man I put on having an erection. But I actually discovered I could really enjoy something new, which was sensuality.**

A personal experience

## HIV and prostate cancer

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) doesn't only affect gay and bisexual men, but as a population gay and bisexual men are more likely to be affected by HIV. This information answers particular questions that gay and bisexual men have asked us about HIV and prostate cancer.

There is evidence that some cancers – such as anal cancer, lung cancer and some lymphomas – are more common in people living with HIV. Researchers have looked at whether men with HIV are more likely to develop prostate cancer. At the moment, we don't know for sure. But there is research that shows that men with HIV can still benefit from treatments for prostate cancer like surgery and radiotherapy. And these men don't seem to get more side effects.

Some medicines used to treat cancer can affect medicines to treat HIV or conditions associated with HIV. If you do have HIV and prostate cancer, it's important that health professionals specialising in HIV and cancer discuss the best treatment options for you. It is also very important that your doctors know about all the medication you take, including over-the-counter and herbal remedies and any recreational drugs.

## Speaking to health professionals

Some men find that their doctor or nurse assumes that they are heterosexual. Health professionals don't record people's sexuality as a standard. But it can help to let your doctor or nurse know about your sexuality and bring your partner to appointments.

Most health professionals will have had equality and diversity training and the NHS has a legal duty to treat people fairly. This means it's illegal to discriminate against you because of your sexual orientation. It is your right to have the same standard of care and treatment as heterosexual men.

But if you feel these rights are not being respected, you can complain.

- If you live in England, contact your nearest Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at your local hospital or through NHS Choices.
- If you live in Scotland, get more information from NHS National Services Scotland.
- If you live in Wales, Health in Wales has more information.
- If you live in Northern Ireland, get more information from nidirect.

You can get information and support from Stonewall's Information Service, or your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

## Including your partner

If you are in a civil partnership then you have the same healthcare rights as a married couple. A civil partnership also gives your partner the right to be your nearest relative. This means that they can be involved in decisions about your healthcare.

If you're not married or in a civil partnership but do have a boyfriend, then you can nominate them as your point of contact or 'next of kin.' Next of kin can be anybody in your social or family network. Staff must respect your wishes about who this is.

If you give permission, your partner, boyfriend or friend can:

- be involved in medical appointments
- be included in discussions about your diagnosis, treatment and care
- make sure your wishes are represented.



**Having an understanding, supportive partner, who can communicate and share his feelings, and allow me to share my feelings with him – that to me is so powerful.**

A personal experience



## Getting more support

All Prostate Cancer UK services are open to everyone, whether you are gay, bisexual, transgender, heterosexual, single or in a relationship. Partners can also use our services.

### Who can help?

#### Gay and bisexual organisations

You may want to talk to gay and bisexual organisations such as:

- The Lesbian and Gay Foundation
- GMFA – the gay men’s health charity
- Stonewall
- Health with Pride
- LLGS (London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard) Helpline
- Malecare.

#### Your medical team

It could be useful to speak to your nurse, doctor, GP or someone else in your medical team. They can help you understand your diagnosis, treatment and side effects, listen to your concerns, and put you in touch with other people who can help.

#### Our Specialist Nurses

Our Specialist Nurses can answer your questions, help explain your diagnosis and go through your treatment options with you. They’ve got time to listen to any concerns you or those close to you have about living with prostate cancer. Everything is confidential. To get in touch:



- call our Specialist Nurses on **0800 074 8383**
- email from our website at **prostatecanceruk.org** (click ‘We can help’).

### Trained counsellors

Counsellors are trained to listen and can help you to find your own answers and ways to deal with things. Many hospitals have counsellors or psychologists in their team who are specialists in helping people with cancer – your doctor or nurse at the hospital will be able to let you know if this is available.

There are different types of counselling available. Your GP may be able to refer you to a counsellor, or you can see a private counsellor. To find out more contact the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy.

### Support groups

At local prostate cancer support groups men get together to share their experiences of living with prostate cancer – you can ask questions, offload worries and know that someone understands what you’re going through. Some groups have been set up by local health professionals, others by men themselves. Many also welcome partners, friends and relatives. To find your nearest prostate cancer support group:

- visit our website at **prostatecanceruk.org** (click ‘We can help’)
- ask your nurse
- call our Specialist Nurses on **0800 074 8383**.



There are also some support groups in the UK for gay and bisexual men with prostate cancer. Find details of these support groups on our website at **prostatecanceruk.org** (click ‘We can help’).

- **Out with Prostate Cancer Manchester.** It offers a safe and confidential environment to discuss your concerns and experiences with other gay and bisexual men who deal with the same problems.



- **Out with Prostate Cancer Midlands Gay, Bisexual and Trans Prostate Cancer Support Group** is based in Birmingham. It provides the opportunity to meet and talk to others who share or understand your experience of prostate cancer.
- **METRO WALNUT** is open to gay and bisexual men, and men who have sex with men and their partners. It is also open to any transsexual women on a one to one basis and to the main group by invitation. It's based in London.

### Our one-to-one support service

Our one-to-one support service is a chance to speak to someone who's been there and understands what you're going through. They can share their experiences and listen to yours. You could discuss treatment options, dealing with side effects, or telling people about your cancer – whatever's important to you.

Our Specialist Nurses will try to match you with a trained volunteer with similar experiences. Let us know if you'd prefer to talk to a gay or bisexual man. Family members can also speak to partners of men with prostate cancer. To arrange it:

- call our Specialist Nurses on **0800 074 8383**
- visit our website at **prostatecanceruk.org** (click 'We can help').

### Our online community

Our online community is a place to talk about whatever's on your mind – your questions, your ups and your downs. Anyone can ask a question or share an experience. It's a place to deal with prostate cancer together.

Sign up on our website at **prostatecanceruk.org** (click 'We can help').

## More information from us

### The Tool Kit

The Tool Kit information pack contains fact sheets that explain how prostate cancer is diagnosed, how it's treated and how it may affect your lifestyle. Each treatment fact sheet also includes a list of suggested questions to ask your doctor. Call our Specialist Nurses for a personally tailored copy.

### Leaflets and booklets

We have a range of other leaflets and booklets about prostate cancer and other prostate problems.

### To order publications:

All our publications are free and available to order or download online. To order them:

- Call us on **0800 074 8383**
- Visit our website at **prostatecanceruk.org/publications**

### Call our Specialist Nurses

If you want to talk about prostate cancer or other prostate problems, call our Specialist Nurses in confidence. You can also email the nurses using the contact form on our website. Visit **prostatecanceruk.org** and click on 'We can help'.



**Speak to our  
Specialist Nurses**

**0800 074 8383\***

**prostatecanceruk.org**

\* Calls are recorded for training purposes only. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.



## Other useful organisations

### Citizens Advice Bureau

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Online advice** [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

Advice on a wide range of issues including financial and legal matters. Find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau in the phonebook or online.

### GMFA

[www.gmfa.org.uk](http://www.gmfa.org.uk)

Provides health information for gay men.

### Health in Wales

[www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)

Information about health and health services in Wales.

### Health with Pride

[www.healthwithpride.nhs.uk](http://www.healthwithpride.nhs.uk)

Online health resource for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Includes information on cancer issues and erection problems.

### LLGS London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard)

[www.llgs.org.uk](http://www.llgs.org.uk)

**Helpline: 0300 330 0630**

Free and confidential support and information for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities throughout the UK.

### Malecare

[malecare.org](http://malecare.org)

American male cancer charity. Provides information and support for gay, bisexual and transgender people and men who have sex with men, including an online forum.

### NHS National Services Scotland

[www.nhsns.org](http://www.nhsns.org)

Supports the NHS in Scotland. Provides information about making a complaint about NHS services in Scotland.

### nidirect

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

Information about government services in Northern Ireland, including health services.

### Stonewall

[www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

**Infoline: 0800 050 20 20**

Information for anyone looking for details about gay rights.

### The Lesbian and Gay Foundation

[www.lgf.org.uk](http://www.lgf.org.uk)

**Helpline: 0845 330 30 30**

Information, advice and support for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

## About Prostate Cancer UK

Prostate Cancer UK fights to help more men survive prostate cancer and deal with other prostate diseases so they can enjoy a better life. We support men by providing vital information and services. We find answers by funding research into causes and treatments and we lead change, raising the profile of all prostate diseases and improving care. We believe that men deserve better.

At Prostate Cancer UK, we take great care to provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate diseases. We hope these will add to the medical advice you have had and help you to make decisions. Our services are not intended to replace advice from your doctor.

References to sources of information used in the production of this booklet are available at [prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)

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- Prostate Cancer UK Specialist Nurses

### **Tell us what you think**

If you have any comments about our publications, you can email: [literature@prostatecanceruk.org](mailto:literature@prostatecanceruk.org)



## Donate today – help others like you

Did you find this information useful? Would you like to help others in your situation access the facts they need? Every year, 40,000 men face a prostate cancer diagnosis and millions more face other prostate diseases. Thanks to our generous supporters, we offer information free to all who need it. If you would like to help us continue this service, please consider making a donation. Your gift could fund the following services:

- £10 could buy a Tool Kit – a set of fact sheets, tailored to the needs of each man with vital information on diagnosis, treatment and lifestyle.
- £25 could give a man diagnosed with a prostate problem unlimited time to talk over treatment options with one of our specialist nurses.

To make a donation of any amount, please call us on **0800 082 1616**, visit **prostatecanceruk.org/donations** or text **PROSTATE to 70004\***. There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit **prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved**

\*You can donate up to £10 via SMS and we will receive 100% of your donation. Texts are charged at your standard rate. For full terms and conditions and more information, please visit [prostatecanceruk.org/termsprostatecanceruk.org/terms](http://prostatecanceruk.org/termsprostatecanceruk.org/terms)



The quotes with the photos in this booklet are not the words of the people who appear.



**Speak to our  
Specialist Nurses**

**0800 074 8383\***

**prostatecanceruk.org**



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**B Follow us on Twitter: @ProstateUK**

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To be reviewed November 2015

**Call our Specialist Nurses from Mon to Fri 9am - 6pm, Wed 10am - 8pm**

\*Calls are recorded for training purposes only.

Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.

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