Diet, physical activity and your risk of prostate cancer
This leaflet is for men who want to find out more about healthy eating and physical activity. A healthy diet and regular exercise are important for staying a healthy weight, and this can help lower your risk of getting aggressive prostate cancer. If you already have prostate cancer, our fact sheet, *Diet and physical activity for men with prostate cancer*, will be more useful.

**What is prostate cancer?**

Prostate cancer can develop when cells in the prostate start to grow in an uncontrolled way. Prostate cancer often grows slowly to start with and may never cause any problems. But some men have aggressive prostate cancer that is more likely to spread. This needs treatment to stop it spreading outside the prostate.
What is my risk of prostate cancer?

1 in 8 – in the UK, about one in eight men will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives. But for some men the risk is even higher.

What can increase my risk of prostate cancer?

Your age – it mainly affects men who are over 50 and your risk increases as you get older.

Your ethnicity – 1 in 4 Black men will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives.

Your family history – you are two and a half times more likely to get it if your father or brother has had it.

Your body weight – new research shows you’re more likely to get aggressive or advanced prostate cancer if you’re overweight.

△ For more information, read our booklet, Know your prostate: A guide to common prostate problems.
Can I reduce my risk of prostate cancer?
No one knows how to prevent prostate cancer, but staying a healthy weight may be important for lowering your risk of getting aggressive prostate cancer. You can’t change your age, ethnicity or family history, but you can take control of your diet and weight.

The latest research suggests that being overweight or obese can increase your risk of being diagnosed with prostate cancer that’s aggressive (more likely to spread) or advanced (cancer that has spread outside the prostate).

What is a healthy weight?
A quick way to check if you’re a healthy weight is to measure your waist size (circumference). You can work out your waist size by wrapping a tape measure around your body, half-way between the top of your hips and the bottom of your ribs.

For a man, if your waist size is more than 94cm (37 inches), you are likely to be overweight. This means you have a higher risk of health problems, possibly including aggressive or advanced prostate cancer. A balanced diet and regular physical activity can help you stay a healthy weight, so these may be important for lowering your risk.

A healthy weight can also improve your general wellbeing and help to prevent other health problems, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some other cancers.

What is a healthy diet?
A balanced diet should contain all of the food groups shown in the diagram opposite. This will ensure your body has all the energy and nutrients it needs, and only a small amount of fatty and sugary foods. The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat and drink during the day.

There are lots of healthy eating tips and recipes available from the NHS Choices website. Visit www.nhs.uk/livewell for ideas.
Try to:
- eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day
- base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates, such as plantain and sweet potato; choosing wholegrain versions where possible
- have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soy drinks), choosing lower fat and lower sugar options
- eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, lean meat and other proteins (including two portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)
- choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat these in small amounts
- drink six to eight cups or glasses of fluid a day
- only have small amounts of foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt or sugar, such as butter, cakes, crisps and fizzy drinks.
How much physical activity should I do?

Regular physical activity is good for your general health. People who keep active are more likely to be a healthy weight and less likely to develop health problems such as heart disease and some cancers. We don’t yet know whether physical activity can help prevent prostate cancer, but some studies suggest it may help to lower your risk, particularly of aggressive prostate cancer. Vigorous exercise may be better than light exercise – but any exercise is better than none at all.

Try these tips to help you get active.

• Aim to do at least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) of moderate exercise every week, such as brisk walking, cycling or pushing a lawnmower. This doesn’t all have to be in one go.

• You could exercise for ten minutes twice a day to begin with. Then when it gets easier, slowly increase this to 30 minutes five times a week.

• Or you could do 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week instead, such as running, rugby or football.

• Find a sport or activity you enjoy – or do lots of different ones so you don’t get bored.

• You might find it more fun to exercise with other people – ask a friend to come with you, or join a sports team or running group.

• If you often drive or take the bus for short journeys, try taking a brisk walk instead.

• Try to spend less time sitting down. You could move about the house while you watch TV, or choose more active video games. And don’t forget to take regular breaks at work.

• You might find it helpful to write down everything you do in an activity diary so you can see how well you’re doing.

Speak to your doctor before starting any new exercise, especially if you have health problems such as heart or lung disease, or joint problems.
**Can any foods lower my risk of prostate cancer?**

There is no strong evidence to show that any individual food can lower your risk of prostate cancer.

You may have heard that certain foods might lower your risk. These include:
- foods containing lycopene – including tomatoes and some other red fruits and vegetables
- foods containing selenium – including Brazil nuts, fish, seafood, liver and kidney
- pulses – including beans, peas, lentils and soya foods
- foods containing vitamin E – including nuts, seeds, wholegrains, green leafy vegetables and avocados.

However, the most recent large research study looked at lots of studies into all these foods, and it’s now much less certain that there are links between these foods and prostate cancer risk.

But you may be able to lower your risk by choosing a healthy diet, including lots of fruit and vegetables and a wide range of other healthy foods.

**Which foods might increase my risk of prostate cancer?**

We still don’t know whether any individual foods increase the risk of prostate cancer. But some research shows that certain foods might increase your risk if you eat a lot of them.

**Dairy foods**

Some studies have found that eating or drinking lots of dairy products, such as milk, yoghurt and cheese, might increase your risk of prostate cancer. This might be because of the calcium in dairy products, or it could be something else.

**Calcium**

Having too much calcium in your diet might increase your risk of prostate cancer. But you do need some calcium – about 700mg
a day – to keep your bones healthy. You can get 700mg from a healthy balanced diet. For example, a 200ml glass of milk contains 240mg of calcium and a small yoghurt contains about 200mg. You can also get small amounts of calcium from meat, fish, nuts, pulses, fruit and vegetables.

**Processed and red meat**
Some studies have found that eating red or processed meat, such as sausages, burgers, bacon and ham, might increase your risk of cancer. But experts aren’t sure whether or not these foods increase your risk of prostate cancer specifically.

The World Cancer Research Fund recommends eating no more than 500g of cooked red meat per week, and very little processed meat. 500g of cooked red meat is about the same as 700g of raw red meat. A medium portion of roast beef or pork is usually about 120g and a medium steak is about 200g (raw weight).
Should I take supplements to lower my risk?
Some people take supplements to try to lower their risk of cancer, but studies suggest this isn’t likely to work. In fact, some supplements may even be harmful. The best way to get all the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients your body needs is to eat a healthy, balanced diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables. If you do use supplements, don’t take more than the recommended daily allowance.

What about smoking?
Smoking increases the risk of health problems such as heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Most studies suggest that smoking probably doesn’t increase your risk of getting prostate cancer. But if you smoke, you may be more likely to get an aggressive type of prostate cancer that is more likely to grow and spread to other parts of the body (advanced prostate cancer). The more you smoke, the greater the risk of this. But if you stop smoking, your risk should start to drop – and after ten years it could be as low as men who have never smoked.

For information about stopping smoking, talk to your doctor or visit the NHS Choices website.
Where can I find out more?

We have a range of other leaflets and booklets about prostate cancer and other prostate problems. All our publications are free and available to order or download online at prostatecanceruk.org/publications or by telephone on 0800 074 8383.

If you are concerned about prostate cancer or other prostate problems, speak to your GP or call our Specialist Nurses.

Other useful organisations

British Dietetic Association
www.bda.uk.com
Telephone: 0121 200 8080

British Heart Foundation
www.bhf.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 330 3311

British Nutrition Foundation
www.nutrition.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7557 7930

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/livewell

World Cancer Research Fund
www.wcrf-uk.org
Telephone: 020 7343 4205

References to sources of information used in the production of this leaflet and details of reviewers are available on our website.
Speak to our
Specialist Nurses
0800 074 8383*
prostatecanceruk.org

Like us on Facebook: Prostate Cancer UK
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© Prostate Cancer UK February 2016
To be reviewed February 2018

Call our Specialist Nurses from Monday to Friday 9am - 6pm,
Wednesday 10am - 8pm
* Calls are recorded for training purposes only.
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