

PRESS RELEASE: Prostate Cancer

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From: Northampton County Health Department

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Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer in America, affecting 1 in 6 men. The older you are, the more likely you are to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Although only 1 in 10,000 under age 40 will be diagnosed, the rate shoots up to 1 in 38 for ages 40 to 59, and 1 in 15 for ages 60 to 69. In fact, more than 65% of all prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 65.

The roles of race and family history are important as well. African American men are 61% more likely to develop prostate cancer compared with Caucasian men and are nearly 2.5 times as likely to die from the disease. Men with a single first-degree relative (father, brother or son) with a history of prostate cancer are twice as likely to develop the disease, while those with two or more relatives are nearly four times as likely to be diagnosed. The risk is even higher if the affected family members were diagnosed at a young age, with the highest risk seen in men whose family members were diagnosed before age 60.

Although genetics might play a role in deciding why one man might be at higher risk than another, social and environmental factors, particularly diet and lifestyle, likely have an effect as well.

Research in the past few years has shown that diet modification might decrease the chances of developing prostate cancer, reduce the likelihood of having a prostate cancer recurrence, or help slow the progression of the disease.

If cancer is caught in its earliest stages, most men will not experience any symptoms. Some men, however, will experience symptoms that might indicate the presence of prostate cancer, including:

- a need to urinate frequently, especially at night;
- difficulty starting urination or holding back urine;
- weak or interrupted flow of urine;
- painful or burning urination;
- difficulty in having an erection;
- painful ejaculation;
- blood in urine or semen; or
- frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or upper thighs.

Since these symptoms can also indicate the presence of other diseases or disorders, men should see a doctor if any symptoms occur.

Northampton County Health Department will hold a free Prostate Screening on Thursday, January 29, 2009 from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm at the J.W. Faison Administrative Building in Jackson. This is a blood test only screening for men age 50 and older, for men of any age with a family history of prostate cancer, and for men who have not had a prostate exam in the past 12 months.

For additional information on the screening or prostate health, call Northampton County Health Department at 534-5841 Monday through Friday 8:30am -5:00pm.