



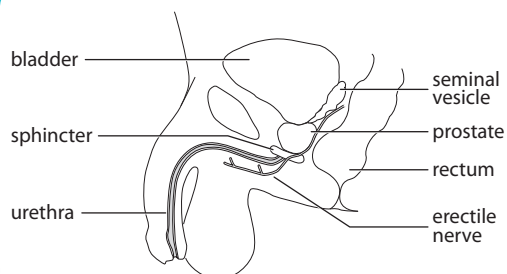
# Radical prostatectomy

Radical prostatectomy is surgery that may be able to cure prostate cancer if it is found early enough. Most men can go back to their normal lives within a few months of surgery.

## What is a prostate?

- The prostate is a gland about the size and shape of a walnut (in younger men) that lies between the bladder and the penis.
- The urethra is a long narrow tube that runs through the centre of the prostate to a muscle called the sphincter. See diagram: *Side view of male lower urinary anatomy*
- The sphincter controls the flow of your urine.
- Both urine and semen leave the body through the urethra.
- The prostate helps makes semen that mixes with sperm and flows out (is ejaculated) when you have an orgasm.
- The nerves (erectile nerves) on either side of the prostate send signals to cause your erections.
- It is possible for cancer to start in your prostate, but spread from there to other parts of your body.
- You may need more tests to see how far your cancer may have spread.

Side view of male lower urinary anatomy



### PSA (prostate-specific antigen)

Blood test

Looks for signs of prostate cancer

### Biopsy

Takes a sample of your tissue or your cells to analyze

Confirms prostate cancer with a "score" (called tumour grade or Gleason score)

Check how the cancer might grow or change in future

### Digital Rectal Exam (DRE)

Checks for cancer or other problems

Your doctor will put a gloved finger coated with a lubricant into your rectum

## What is a Radical Prostatectomy?

- With a radical prostatectomy, surgery will remove your prostate if:
  - Your prostate cancer has not yet spread
  - You are in good health
  - You are likely to live at least more ten years.

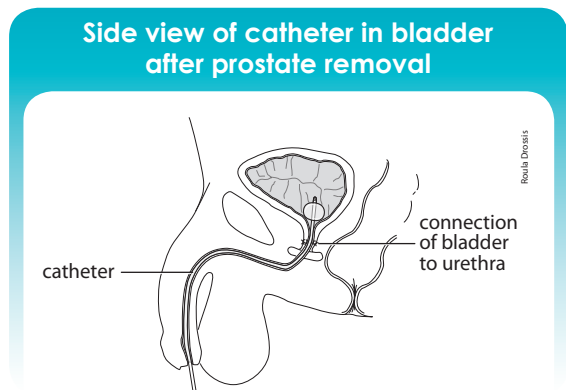
## What are my treatment options?

- Observation: You visit your doctor regularly but you are not treated unless your cancer has grown (also called active surveillance).
- Radical Prostatectomy: Your prostate is removed.
- Radiation therapy which includes:
  - High doses of radiation sent right into your prostate to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors.

- Tiny radioactive pellets put inside your prostate (called brachytherapy) to destroy cancer cells with radiation.

## What happens during surgery?

- Surgery usually takes about two or three hours.
- Your doctor may choose to:
  - make a cut (incision) in your lower belly below the navel OR
  - make several small "keyhole" cuts (called laparoscopic surgery) instead of one long cut
  - a laparoscope is a thin, tube-like tool with a light and a lens.
- Laparoscopic surgery can
  - reduce your blood loss, pain, and discomfort because of the smaller cuts
  - leaves smaller scars than large incisions
- Your doctor may decide to remove lymph nodes in your pelvis during surgery and send samples for testing.
- During radical prostatectomy:
  - Your prostate is carefully removed from other parts of your body, such as the bladder and urethra.
  - As much of your sphincter muscle is kept as possible  
See diagram: *Side view of male lower urinary anatomy.*
  - Your erectile nerves will be saved if possible see section *What is a prostate?*.
- A catheter (a hollow tube) is passed through your penis into the bladder.
- A small balloon will hold the catheter which is sewn to the bladder to keep it in place. See diagram: *Side view of catheter in bladder after prostate is removed.*
- Your doctor will decide the best time to remove the catheter.



## What will I need to know before my surgery?

- You may need some lab tests before your surgery.
- You and your doctor should talk about your medications (such as blood thinners, aspirin, arthritis medications or even "natural herbs.")
- Some medications can increase your risk for bleeding.
- You may need to stop taking some of these medications before surgery

## What happens on the day of the surgery?

- You will go to hospital in the morning and prepare for your surgery.
- You should not eat or drink anything for several hours before the surgery.
- You may have to wear tight stockings (support stockings) or take medications to prevent blood clots in your legs.
- In the operating room, the anesthesiologist (the doctor who will keep you comfortable during surgery) will attach you to machines to check on your body temperature, oxygen levels, and blood pressure.
- A general anesthetic will let you sleep through the surgery.

## What will happen right after surgery?

- After the surgery, you recover for about 1-2 hours until you are stable and can be moved to a hospital room.
- At first you may have a tube in your nose for oxygen, an intravenous (IV) line in your arm for fluids, the catheter, and a drain in your lower belly to remove fluids from the incision.
- All of these except the catheter will be removed within a few days.
- It is important to get back to activity as soon as possible (such as daily walks).
- In hospital, your care team will have you:
  - Sit up or stand on the day of surgery.
  - Walk the day after your surgery.
  - Doing breathing and leg exercises.

## Will I be in pain after the surgery?

- To help with any pain, your doctor will give you one of the following:
  - An IV so that you can give yourself a pain killer at the touch of a button.
  - “Shots” of a painkiller.
  - A tablet or suppository (medicine to put into your rectum).

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## When will I go home?

- You will go home once you are drinking, eating, and able to take care of yourself.
- This is usually one to three days after surgery.

## What will I need to do when I get home from the hospital?

- You will learn how to look after your incision and your catheter until it is removed.
- Since major surgery is hard on you physically and mentally:
  - You may need to rest more than usual
  - It may take several months to get your full energy level back.
- A few weeks after surgery, your doctor will update you about your tumour.

## What are the risks and complications of radical prostatectomy?

### Short-term risks

- Bleeding that may require a blood transfusion.
- An infection that may need antibiotics.
- Heart or lung problems.
- Blood clots in your legs that can be life-threatening if they move into your lungs.

### Long-term risks

- Being unable to have natural erections. This can improve over time. Treatments are available if necessary.
- You may still feel an orgasm, but you will not produce semen (dry orgasm).
- You will be infertile (unable to get your partner pregnant).

### Many men leak urine

- Exercises will improve this leaking, but some men may still need underwear to absorb the urine.
- In rare cases, more surgery may be needed.

- It is possible that your cancer may spread but may be too small to notice.
- Your cancer may return.
- Your doctor will suggest a regular follow-up schedule to keep an eye on your cancer.

### Bottom Line

Within a few months after having a radical prostatectomy, most men are back to their normal lives.

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