

## **Getting Ready for Prostate Cancer Surgery**

**(The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different.)**

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## **What Will I Learn?**

You and your doctor have decided that you will have surgery as a treatment for your prostate cancer. It is important for you to learn about prostate cancer surgery so that you will know what to expect and how to get ready for your surgery. In this booklet, you will learn about the following:

- What happens when you have prostate cancer surgery,
- What you can do to get ready for surgery,
- What foods you can eat before your surgery to strengthen your body,
- Things you should think about and plan for before you go to the hospital.

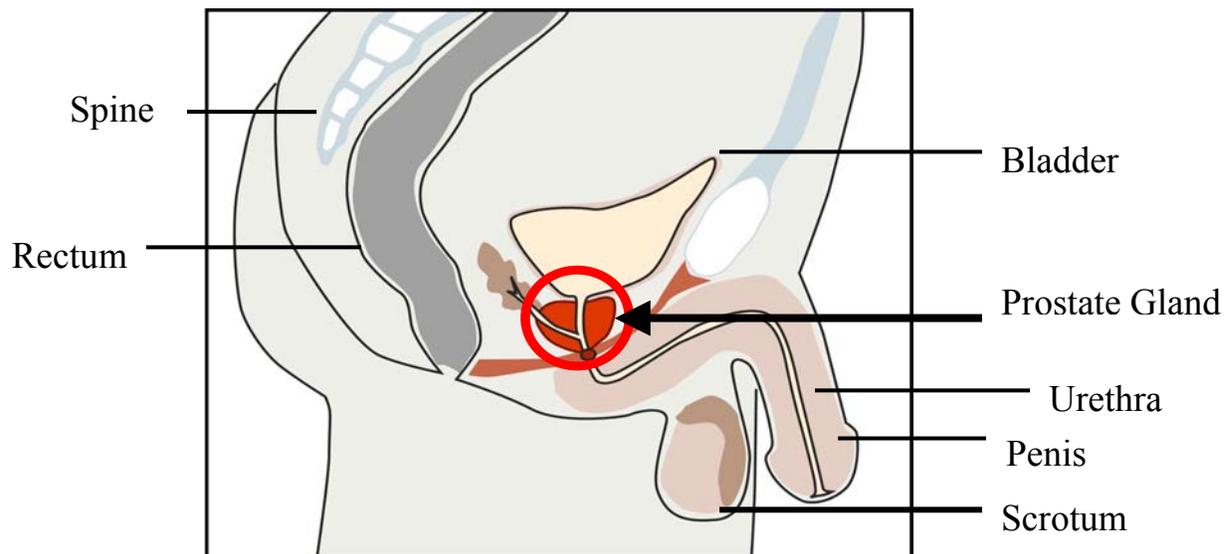
It is important to think about how you will get ready for surgery now that you and your doctor have decided that surgery is the best treatment for you.

Words that appear in **bold** (dark text) can also be found in the “Key Words” section at the end of this booklet.

## What Is Prostate Cancer Surgery?

When you have prostate cancer surgery, your surgeon takes out your entire prostate gland. The name for this operation is a **radical prostatectomy** (ra-di-cul pros-ta-tek-toe-me). This operation is done if the doctor thinks the cancer in your prostate has not spread to other parts of your body.

**See where your prostate gland is found in your body.**



## **After You Have Decided to Have the Surgery**

Many men find that after making the decision to have surgery, waiting for the surgery is the hardest thing they have to do. There are many things you can do to help yourself during this waiting time, like:



- Learning more about what will happen during and after your prostate cancer surgery
- Talking with someone close to you or with someone who has already had prostate cancer surgery
- Keeping busy and doing those activities you would normally do

It is important to find what works best for you during this waiting time. Your doctor and your nurse case manager are there to help you get ready for your surgery. They can answer any questions or concerns about getting ready for your prostate cancer surgery.

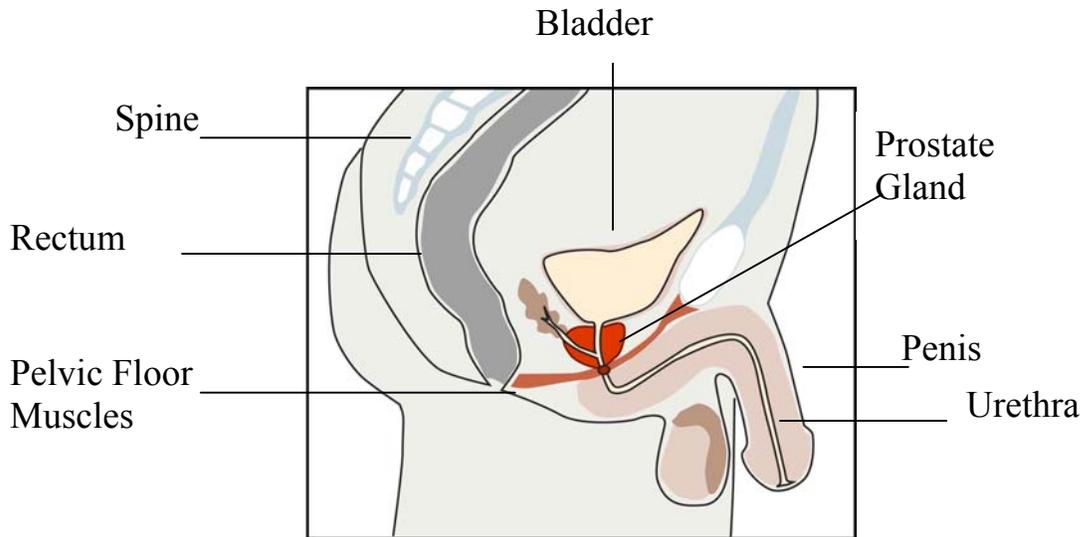
## **What Can I Do To Get Ready for My Surgery?**

There are many things that you can do before your surgery to help make your body stronger so you can get better faster.

### **Kegel Exercises Before Your Surgery**

Before surgery is a good time to start practicing the **Kegel exercises** that you will use after surgery to help get control of your urine flow. The exercises help strengthen the **pelvic floor muscles** (also known as the pubococcygeus or PC muscles). These muscles support your bladder and rectum and help control your urine flow. You can see how a Kegel exercise should feel by starting your urine stream and then stopping it before you are done peeing. The muscles that you use to stop your urine stream are the ones that you want to exercise. You can practice your Kegel exercise by tightening these muscles when you are sitting and relaxing or standing at the refrigerator, or anytime. No one will be able to see that you are doing the exercises. Some men find it helpful to put a reminder note on their refrigerator or bathroom mirror to do their Kegel exercises. For more information, please see the IMPACT booklet, “Kegel Exercises.”

See where your pelvic floor muscles are found in your body.



**Kegel Exercises. Use the space below to make a plan.**

**When will you do your Kegel Exercises?**

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**How do you do a Kegel Exercise?**

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## Your Diet Before Surgery

It is a good idea to use the weeks before your surgery to make your body stronger by eating a healthier diet. Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals. Include



servings of milk, cheese, yogurt, meat, chicken and fish. When eating meat, choose lean cuts and trim the fat around the edges. Eating a diet with these foods will help your body to heal after surgery. Cut down on or stay away from fat, sugar, alcohol and salt. Eating a lot of these things is not good for your body.

Foods that are high in iron and vitamin C will make your blood strong before surgery. Eating foods that have a lot of iron and vitamin C will keep you from having a low blood count. When you have a low blood count you may feel tired and may not heal as well or get better as quickly. If you save some of your own blood at the blood bank before your operation, you may have a low blood count. So, it is important that you eat foods high in iron and vitamin C to make your blood strong. See the part in this booklet called “Medial Tests” for more information about giving blood before your surgery.

Iron can be found in the following foods:

- Meat, eggs and beans
- Vegetables such as spinach, broccoli and other greens
- Iron fortified cereals

Vitamin C can be found in the following foods:

- Fruits, like oranges, lemons, grapefruit, kiwi, mango, strawberries, melon
- Vegetables like broccoli, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peppers, winter squash, green vegetables and raw cabbage

Eating one food with iron and one food with vitamin C together helps your body use the iron better. Try having beans with some fresh tomatoes or iron added cereal with a glass of orange juice. This will taste good while helping your body. If you are not sure about how healthy some of the foods that you eat are, talk to your nurse case manager about them.

### **Smoking, Drinking and Exercise**

The better shape you are in, the better you will do after surgery. If you are exercising regularly, congratulations! Keep it up. If not, before your surgery is a good time to start walking everyday. This will help make your body stronger

before your surgery. It will also help you to get better after your surgery. Talk to your doctor before you begin any exercise program.

If you smoke, now is a good time to try to quit. Smoking can slow your body's healing after your surgery. Your nurse case manager can help you find the best way to help you quit. If you can't quit smoking, it is a good idea to cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke each day.

If you drink more than 1 alcohol drink a day (a beer, a shot of liquor, a glass of wine), now is a good time to cut down on the amount you drink. Cutting down on alcohol will help your body get stronger before and after your prostate cancer surgery.

## **Foods to eat before your surgery**

- **What foods will you eat to help strengthen your body for your surgery?**

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- **What foods that are high in iron do you eat now? What foods that are high in iron will you add to your diet?**

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- **What foods that are high in vitamin C do you eat now? What foods that are high in vitamin C will you add to your diet?**

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- **Do you need to go to the grocery store to buy any food? If so, what will you buy?:**

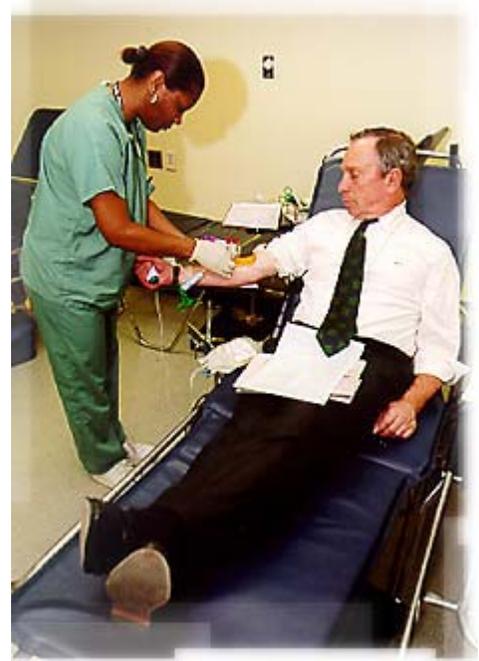
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## Medical Tests

Before you have your prostate cancer surgery, you may have a general check-up, blood tests and x-rays to make sure you are ready for surgery. Your surgeon will talk to you about giving blood. The blood that you give is saved and may be given back to you during or after your surgery if you need it. If you decide to do this, it will be just like when someone gives blood at the Red Cross. The process of saving blood for your surgery may take up to two weeks.



## **Getting Ready for Surgery**

- **What tests has your doctor told you that you need to have before your surgery? List them here.**

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- **When are your appointments for these tests? List the day(s) and time(s) of your appointments.**

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- **Where do you need to go to have these tests? List the places where you need to go for your tests.**

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- **Do you need transportation to these places? If you do, speak with your nurse case manager (1-800-409-8252).**

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## What Do I Need to Do to Get Ready for Surgery?

Your doctor will talk to you about the steps you need to follow to get ready for your prostate cancer surgery. The following will give you an idea of some of the things you may need to do before you go to the hospital.

Speak to your doctor about any medications or herbs you are taking. Your doctor will tell you which medications you should stop taking or keep taking before your surgery. For example: if you are taking **ibuprofen** (medicines like Motrin, Advil) or aspirin, you may need to stop taking this medicine about 10 days before your surgery.

Make a list of your medicines, how much you take (**the dose or amount**), and how often you take them. Even the ones that you

buy yourself like vitamins and herbs or those you may have gotten from other doctors or healers. If you want, you can bring all of the medicines that you take to one of your doctor's appointments so your doctor can see what you are taking.

Make sure to tell your doctor about any allergies you have.

Your doctor's office will tell you what time to be at the hospital. Plan on staying in the hospital for 2 or 3 days. Your doctor will make sure you are ready to leave the hospital after your surgery. After you go home, you will not be able to drive or



lift heavy items for 2 to 3 weeks. You will need someone to help drive you to appointments or go grocery shopping. Speak with a family member or friend to find out if they can help you. You may need to ask more than one person if they can help you.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your surgery. If you have medicines that you need to take, you can take them with small sips of water.

**Before you go to the hospital.**

- **What medications are you taking? List them here so you can speak with your doctor about them.**

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- **Do you have any allergies that you need to tell your doctor about? If so, list them here.**

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- **Who is going to help you when you get home from the hospital? Write their name(s) down here:**

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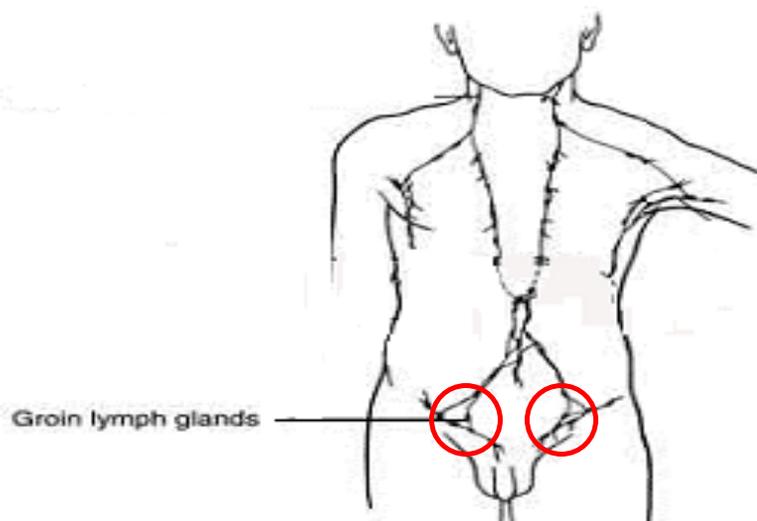
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## What Happens During the Surgery?

The operation will begin after you have been given general anesthesia. **General anesthesia** is when you are given medicine to make you sleep during the surgery. You will not feel anything during your surgery with general anesthesia. After you are asleep, your **surgeon** (the doctor who does the surgery) will make an opening, called an **incision**, in the lower part of your stomach below your belly button. Then your surgeon will remove your prostate gland. Your surgeon will also remove the lymph nodes around your prostate gland. Your lymph nodes will be checked to see if your cancer has spread to them. **Lymph nodes** are small glands you have throughout your body that remove bacteria, as well as cancer cells, from your body. Sometimes cancer cells can get in the lymph nodes and move to other parts of the body through them.

**See where your lymph nodes are found near your prostate.**

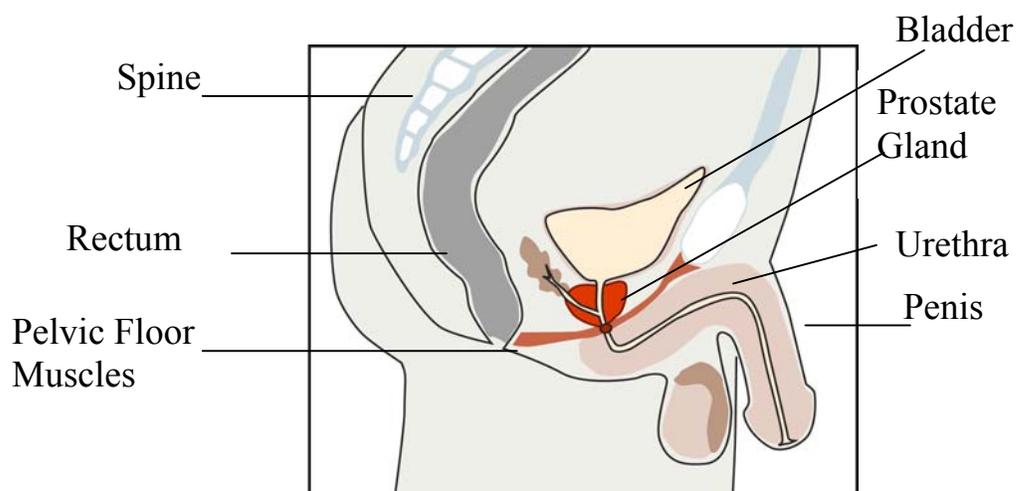


On each side of your prostate are small groups of nerves. It is the job of these nerves to make erections possible. If the cancer has not spread to these nerves, your surgeon will try to save them and leave them in place. This type of operation is called a “**nerve sparing surgery.**” Even if you have a nerve sparing surgery, there is still a chance that these nerves will not work as they should after your surgery. This means that you may not be able to have **erections** for awhile after your surgery. It may take up to 12 months after your surgery before you can have an erection. An erection is when your penis is hard enough to have **intercourse** (sex). If you had difficulty having erections before surgery, your erections will not be better after surgery. Some men find that even if they have nerve sparing surgery they are not able to have erections. Not being able to have an erection is also known as **erectile dysfunction**. There are medicines and medical devices that can help you have an erection. Please speak with your doctor or nurse case manager about them.

After you have your surgery, you will not have sperm to make a baby. After a prostatectomy, when you have sex, you will not have fluid (ejaculate) come from your penis like you did before your surgery. This is called **dry ejaculation**. If this is a concern for you and your partner, talk to your doctor or nurse case manager.

Sometimes after the surgery, men have a hard time controlling their urine. This is because the surgery area is close to your **bladder** and your **urethra**, the tube in your body that carries urine out through your penis. The surgery may weaken the muscles that control your urine flow. This is why you may leak urine or are not able to control your urine after your surgery. Not being able to control your urine is called **incontinence**. Control of your urine begins to happen around 3 months after your surgery. Usually a man is able to control his urine at night first and then during the day. It sometimes takes up to 12 months for a man to be able control his urine. For many men, however, this problem gets better with time. Speak with your doctor or nurse case manager if you have problems with your urine control. There are special products or medicines that can be useful so that you don't soil your clothes and that allow you to feel more comfortable and not be embarrassed.

**The prostate gland wraps around your urethra like a donut.**



## **Your Surgery**

- **What are your concerns about incontinence or erectile dysfunction?**

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- **Who will you talk to about these concerns?**

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- **How will you discuss incontinence and erectile dysfunction with your partner?**

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- **What questions do you have for your doctor about the surgery or anesthesia?**

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## **What Have I Learned From Reading This?**

In this booklet, you learned about prostate cancer surgery so that you will know what to expect before, during and after treatment. You learned:

- What prostate cancer surgery is
- How you get ready for your prostate cancer surgery
- What foods to eat to make your body more healthy before your surgery
- What you should do before you go to the hospital

If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor or nurse case manager. It is important that you understand what is going on with your treatment. This knowledge will help you take better care of yourself and feel more in control.

## Key Words

**Anesthesia:** the medicine the doctor gives you that numbs your body so that you do not feel pain when you have surgery.

**Bladder:** the organ in your body, which holds your urine.

**Dose:** amount of a medication you take.

**Dry ejaculation:** when no fluid (ejaculate) comes from your penis when you have sex.

**Ejaculate:** the fluid that comes from your penis when you have sex.

**Erectile dysfunction:** unable to have an erection hard enough to have sex.

**Erection:** when your penis is hard enough to have intercourse (sex).

**General anesthesia:** medicine that makes you sleep during your operation so that you do not feel anything.

**Genital area:** the part of your body that includes your penis, scrotum, perineum, and anus.

**Ibuprofen:** a type of pain medicine like Motrin.

**Incision:** an opening the surgeon will make to perform the surgery.

**Incontinence:** Not being able to control your urine.

**Intercourse:** the act of having sex.

**Kegel exercises:** exercises that strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.

**Lymph nodes:** small glands you have throughout your body that remove bacteria, as well as cancer cells, from your body.

**Nerve sparing surgery:** an operation that protects the nerves that are around the prostate gland.

**Pelvic floor muscles:** (also known as pubococcygeus or PC muscles) these muscles support your bladder and rectum and help control your urine flow.

**Surgeon:** the doctor who does the surgery.

**Urethra:** the tube in your body that carries urine out through your penis.