

# Diet and physical activity for men with prostate cancer



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This fact sheet is for anyone with prostate cancer who wants to improve their general health. Your partner, family or friends might also find it helpful.

We describe how a healthy diet and regular physical activity may help you manage the effects of prostate cancer and its treatment, and why staying a healthy weight may be very important.

We don't recommend any set diet or exercise programme. Instead, we suggest some changes to improve your overall health, which might help with your prostate cancer.

This fact sheet doesn't talk about eating problems caused by prostate cancer or its treatment. If you want information on these, ask your doctor or nurse. They may be able to refer you to a dietitian. You can also speak to our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383, or chat to them online.

## Symbols

These symbols appear in this fact sheet to guide you to more information:



Speak to our Specialist Nurses



Read our publications

## Why is a healthy lifestyle important?

A healthy lifestyle can give you more control over your health and help you to improve it. Lots of things can affect your health, including:

- body weight
- diet
- physical activity
- alcohol
- smoking.

## Body weight

Staying a healthy weight is one of the best things you can do for your overall health. It can lower your risk of many health problems, including heart disease, type-2 diabetes and some cancers. It may also be important for men with prostate cancer, as there is strong evidence that being overweight raises the risk of aggressive or advanced prostate cancer.



Being a healthy weight may mean your prostate cancer is less likely to spread after surgery or radiotherapy. Hormone therapy might also be less effective if you're very overweight. And staying a healthy weight may help you manage or reduce some of the side effects of treatments, such as urinary problems after surgery. See page 15 for more information.

Being underweight can also affect your health. For example, underweight men have a higher risk of bone thinning (see page 15). Some types of hormone therapy can also cause bone thinning, so men on hormone therapy may be more at risk of bone thinning if they are also underweight. Being underweight can also slow your recovery from treatments such as surgery.

If you're underweight and are struggling to put on weight, speak to your GP. They may check to see if you have any other health problems that could be causing your weight loss. They may also refer you to a dietitian to help you put on some weight.

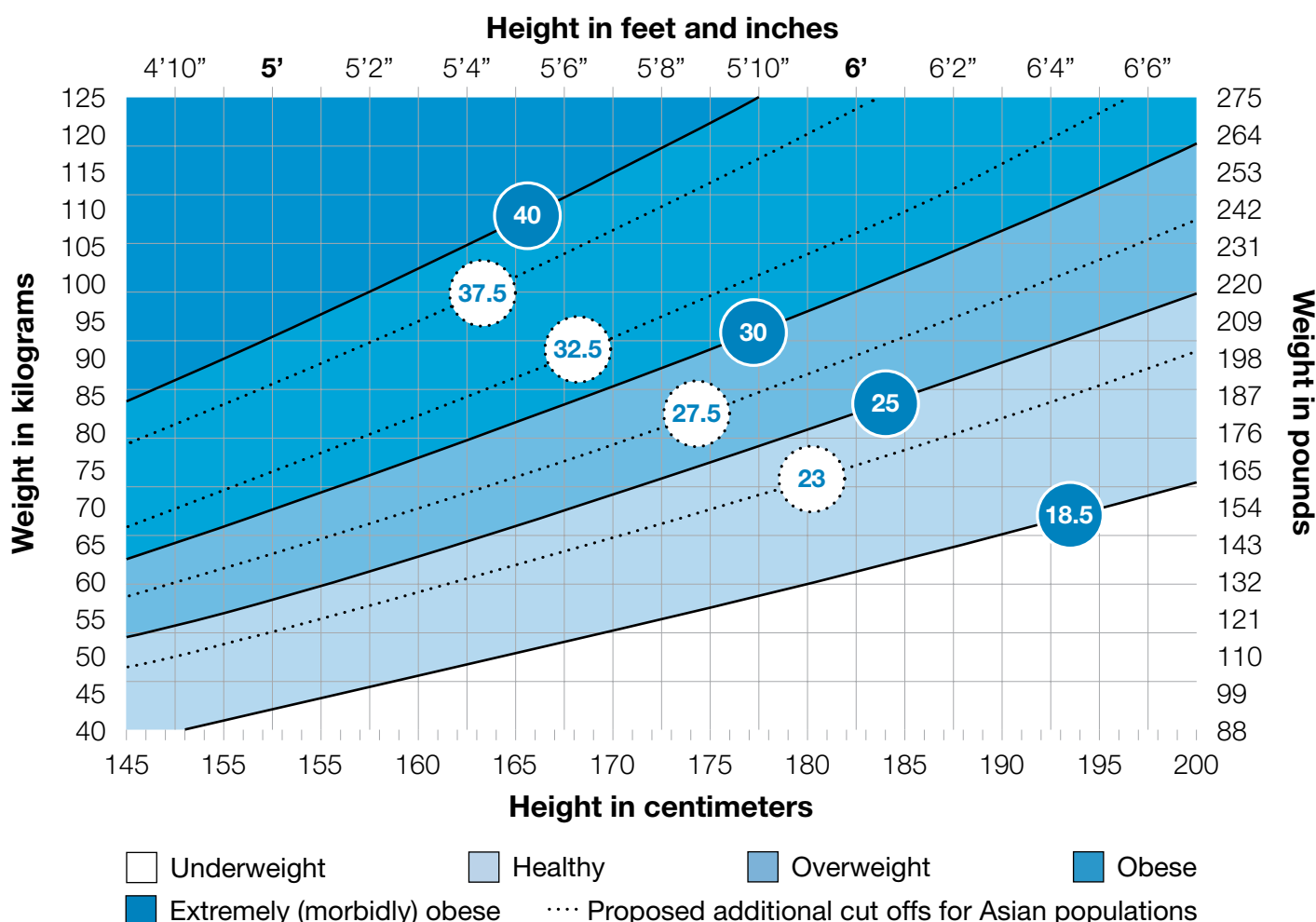
## How do I know if I'm a healthy weight?

### Your body mass index (BMI)

You can use the body mass index (BMI) chart below to check if you're a healthy weight for your height.

1. Find your weight (in pounds or kilograms) and draw a line from left to right of the chart.
2. Then find your height (in feet and inches or centimeters) and draw a line from top to bottom.
3. The two lines will meet in one of the shaded areas, showing whether you are a healthy weight for your height.

**This chart is not suitable for everyone. If you have a very muscular build, it may not be suitable. This is because your BMI only tells you if you're carrying too much weight – it can't tell the difference between fat and muscle.**



**Your BMI limit may also change depending on your ethnicity. For example, a lower BMI threshold is recommended for Black African, African-Caribbean, South Asian and Chinese ethnic groups.**

**You can also use the BMI calculator on the NHS Website for a more personalised BMI result.**

### **Your waist size**

Another way to check if you're a healthy weight is to measure the size of your waist, as carrying fat around your stomach can raise the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other health problems. Wrap a tape measure around your body, half-way between the top of your hips and the bottom of your ribs. Don't suck your tummy in, just breathe out naturally.

For a man, if your waist size is 94cm (37 inches) or more, you have a higher risk of health problems. If it's 102cm (40 inches) or more, you're at very high risk of some serious health conditions and should speak to your GP. These are the guidelines for white European, Black African, Middle Eastern and East Mediterranean men.

For African-Caribbean, South Asian, Chinese and Japanese men, if your waist size is 90cm (35.4 inches) or more, you're at a very high risk of developing health problems.

### **Losing weight safely**

It's important to lose weight steadily by making healthy changes to your diet and slowly increasing the amount of exercise you do. Try to avoid popular short-term diets that cause very quick weight loss. They often cut out important food groups or can be too low in calories. If you lose weight too quickly by not eating enough, your body might not get all the nutrients it needs. And if you don't continue to eat healthily after losing weight, you may put the weight back on again. It's always best to speak to your doctor or a dietitian before changing your diet. See page 5 for more on healthy eating, and page 12 for more on physical activity.

### **Getting support**

Talk to your doctor if you're worried about your weight – whether you want to lose or gain weight. They can help you think about suitable changes to your diet or types of physical activity. They may be able to refer you to a dietitian or exercise programme. You can also get more information from other organisations (see page 19).

#### **Top tip**

Remember – if you're overweight, any weight loss is better than none. And once you've achieved your goal, it's important to continue eating healthily and being active to keep the weight off.

### **Diet**

A healthy diet is important for your overall health. It can help you stay a healthy weight and can lower your risk of health problems such as heart disease, type-2 diabetes and some cancers. A healthy diet can also help you recover if you've had prostate cancer surgery (radical prostatectomy). Read more about healthy eating on page 5.

You may have heard of certain foods or diets that might be helpful for men with prostate cancer, and some that might be harmful (see page 9). Unfortunately, different studies have had different results, so we don't know for sure whether specific foods can affect the growth of prostate cancer or the risk of it spreading. However, some changes to your diet may help reduce or manage some of the side effects of prostate cancer treatment (see page 15) and can help you feel more in control.

## Physical activity

Physical activity is any type of movement that uses energy. It doesn't have to be a sport or going to the gym – it could be walking, swimming or gardening.

We don't know for sure if physical activity can help slow the growth of prostate cancer, but we do know that it's important for your overall health and wellbeing. It helps to prevent many health problems such as heart disease and type-2 diabetes, and can help you stay a healthy weight.

Being active can also help with some of the side effects of treatment (see page 15). For example, physical activity can help manage fatigue and sexual problems. It can also help maintain muscle strength and help you stay a healthy weight. Being a healthy weight may help to lower your risk of advanced prostate cancer.

Physical activity can also help support your emotional and mental wellbeing. It can lift your mood and make you feel happier in your day to day life, as well as helping you cope with feelings of anxiety or depression. For more information on getting active, see page 12.

## Alcohol

We don't know if alcohol has any specific effect on men with prostate cancer. But we do know that drinking too much alcohol can make you put on weight and cause other health problems, such as heart and liver disease and some cancers.

The government recommends that men should not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week. That's equal to six pints of average-strength beer or ten small glasses of low-strength wine. Try to spread this out over the week and have some alcohol-free days.

Speak to your doctor or nurse about whether it's okay to drink alcohol while you're having prostate cancer treatment. If you have urinary problems, try to drink less alcohol. Alcohol can irritate the bladder and make urinary problems worse. It could also affect your ability to get an erection. There are lots of tips on drinking less alcohol and getting support on the NHS Website.

### How many units of alcohol are in a drink?

- A pint of lower-strength lager, beer or cider (3.6 per cent alcohol) contains 2 units.
- A 175ml glass of wine (12 per cent alcohol) contains about 2 units.
- A 25ml measure of single spirit (40 per cent alcohol) contains 1 unit.

## Smoking

Smoking can cause health problems such as heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. It may also be harmful for men with prostate cancer.

Some research suggests that smoking makes prostate cancer more likely to grow and spread to other parts of the body (advanced prostate cancer). And the more you smoke, the greater the risk.

Smoking may also make prostate cancer more likely to come back after surgery or radiotherapy, and heavy smoking may mean you're more likely to die from prostate cancer. But the good news is that if you stop smoking, your risk should start to drop – and after 10 years it could be as low as for men who have never smoked.

Stopping smoking can also help with the side effects of prostate cancer treatment. For example, you may be less likely to get certain urinary problems after radiotherapy. And stopping smoking may help to protect your bone health if you're having hormone therapy (see page 15).

There's lots of support available to help you stop smoking. Talk to your doctor or nurse or visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

## How can I eat more healthily?

If you decide to improve your diet, remember that food is an enjoyable and often social part of life. You should still be able to enjoy your meals and occasional treats.

A healthy diet doesn't need to be boring. In fact, it's good to eat a variety of different foods so that you get a range of nutrients. You could try some new foods to add more variety to your meals. For example, you could try a new fruit or vegetable each week.

Set yourself realistic goals and start by making small changes that you feel comfortable with. Trying to make lots of big changes all at once can be difficult, and you may find it hard to keep them going over time.

Try to cut down on unhealthy foods and drinks, such as those high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, red and processed meat, and those with added flavouring or preservatives. Look at the labels on packaged foods to find out how many calories (energy), and how much fat, salt and sugar are in them. You can then compare different products to find the healthiest ones. Remember that low-fat foods aren't always the best option – some may still be high in sugar or calories.

If you want help to improve your diet, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian, they can help you make healthy changes to what you eat. They can also give you advice if you have special dietary needs or other health problems that could be affected by your diet, such as diabetes.

### Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet and a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Eating lots of fruit and vegetables helps to lower your risk of health problems, including heart disease and some cancers. It can also help you lose weight or stay a healthy weight.

Aim to eat at least five portions (400g) of fruit and vegetables each day. They can be fresh, frozen, dried or tinned with no added sugar or salt. Try to choose tinned fruit in natural juice

rather than syrup. One portion of fresh, canned or frozen fruit and vegetables is roughly 80g in weight. One portion of dried fruit is 30g and should be kept to mealtimes. Try to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colours each day, as they contain different nutrients.

Five portions may sound like a lot, but if you try to include one or two portions in each meal, and choose fruit as snacks, this should be enough. The table below gives examples of portions.

### How much is a portion?

Examples of single portions	
Small fruit	Two plums, two satsumas, seven strawberries, or two kiwi fruit.
Medium fruit	One apple, one banana or one nectarine.
Large fruit	Half a grapefruit, one slice of melon (5cm slice), or two slices of mango (5cm slices).
Dried fruit	30g of dried fruit is around one heaped tablespoon of raisins, or two figs.
Green vegetables	Two broccoli spears, or four heaped tablespoons of cooked green beans, kale or two tablespoons of cooked spinach.
Cooked vegetables	Three heaped tablespoons of carrots, peas or eight cauliflower florets.
Salad vegetables	5cm piece of cucumber or seven cherry tomatoes.
Pulses and beans	Three heaped tablespoons of baked beans or kidney beans.
Juice	One medium glass (150ml) of unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice. Try to only drink 150ml of fruit juice and smoothies a day.

### Starchy foods

Starchy foods are the main source of carbohydrates – they give you energy and help you to feel full for longer, so it's important to include some starchy foods every day in your diet. Aim to have a portion at each meal.



Starchy foods include cereals, potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, plantain, sweet potato and yam. Choose wholegrain (for example, whole rolled oats, corn, quinoa, granary bread, brown rice) and other high-fibre options (for example, potatoes with their skins on, pulses and beans) where possible.



**I felt that changing my diet was one way I could fight back. It may not have made a difference but I felt better for it.**

*A personal experience*

#### **Top tip**

As a general rule, a portion of starchy food is about the size of your fist.

#### **Protein-rich foods**

Protein is an important part of a healthy diet. It helps to build and repair body tissue, and maintain muscle mass. Protein also helps make hormones and new cells, such as blood cells. If you are having treatment for prostate cancer, you should aim to eat between 1 and 1.5g of protein per kg of body weight a day (g/kg/day). Foods high in protein include beans, pulses, fish, eggs, Quorn and meat.

If you eat red meat, try to eat no more than 3 portions per week, which is about 350-500g of cooked red meat (700 to 750g before cooking) a week. This includes beef, pork and lamb. You should also try to avoid processed meat and meat cooked at very high temperatures as this can increase your risk of bowel and stomach cancer. Processed meat is meat that has been preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or with preservatives. It includes ham, bacon and some sausages (for example hot dogs, salami and pepperoni).

You could choose white meat such as chicken with the skin removed or fish instead. Or you could eat beans, peas or lentils, which are lower in fat and higher in fibre than meat.

#### **Dairy and dairy alternatives**

Dairy foods are high in calcium. Calcium is important for strong bones and your overall health, so you need some in your diet – around 700mg per day. Some studies suggest that eating a lot of calcium might increase the risk of your prostate cancer growing and spreading. Other studies have found no link, but it may be an idea to avoid eating more than 1500mg of calcium – the amount in about 1.6 litres of milk – a day.

If you're on hormone therapy, you'll need extra calcium to protect your bones. This is because hormone therapy can cause bone thinning, which means your bones are more likely to break if you fall over. Men on hormone therapy should aim for 1200-1500mg of calcium (about 2-3 portions of dairy) each day. This is still a safe amount.

Choose lower-fat options such as skimmed or 1% fat milk and reduced-fat cheese. There have been some studies that suggest high-fat dairy foods might increase the risk of your prostate cancer growing and spreading, but others have found no link.

Non-dairy sources of calcium include soya products with added calcium (for example, plant-based milk and yoghurt) green leafy vegetables, and fish where you eat the bones such as sardines.

If you don't think there's enough calcium in your diet, speak to your doctor or nurse about taking calcium supplements.

Dairy foods	Amount of calcium
Semi-skimmed milk (200ml)	245mg
Plain low-fat yoghurt (150g)	245mg
Cheddar cheese (30g)	205mg
Other foods	Amount of calcium
Tinned sardines with bones (100g)	500mg
Kale (95g)	145mg
Tofu (100g)	110mg
Kidney beans (60g)	45mg
Broccoli (85g)	35mg
Non-dairy alternatives, such as soya milk	Varies – choose one with added calcium

### High-fat foods

You need to eat some fat for your body to function properly. But eating too much fat can make you put on weight, which increases your risk of being diagnosed with aggressive or advanced prostate cancer. There are also different types of fat – saturated fat and unsaturated fat. Unsaturated fats are thought to be healthier than saturated fats.

Unsaturated fats are found in plant foods such as olive oil, vegetable oils, rapeseed oil, avocados, nuts and seeds. They are also found in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines.

Saturated fats are found in meat, cakes, biscuits, pastries, butter, coconut milk and cream, and high-fat dairy products such as cheese. You should aim to eat no more than 30g of saturated fat a day.

Replacing animal fats with vegetable oils may help men with prostate cancer to live for longer. There is also some research that suggests eating lots of saturated fat might be linked with an increased risk of prostate cancer coming back after surgery, and of developing advanced prostate cancer. But we need more research to know for sure whether this is the case, as other studies haven't found a link.

### Ways to eat less total fat and saturated fat

- Replace fatty snacks such as crisps and biscuits with healthier options such as fruit.
- Avoid sausages, burgers and processed meat such as ham or bacon.
- Eat less red meat and remove any visible fat. Try eating chicken or fish instead.
- Remove any skin from chicken or turkey. The skin contains lots of saturated fat.
- Add less oil, butter or other cooking fats when you cook.
- Grill, bake, poach or steam food instead of frying or roasting.
- Choose rapeseed or vegetable oil for cooking and olive oil for salad dressings.
- Choose tomato-based sauces instead of creamy ones.
- Eat healthy fats from plant foods, such as avocados, nuts and seeds.

Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products, or dairy alternatives such as soya milk, rice milk or oat milk instead.

If you're struggling to eat because of nausea (feeling sick), speak to your doctor or dietitian. They'll be able to give you the support and help you need. You may find it helpful to avoid strong-smelling foods. Cold foods tend to smell less. Use pre-prepared food, or it may help if someone cooks for you.

### Ten steps to eating well

- 1. Eat three meals a day.** If you don't feel very hungry or you have difficulty eating, try to eat small amounts often instead.
- 2. Include all the food groups.** The Eatwell Guide on page 10 shows the proportions you should include in your diet to get the right balance of nutrients.
- 3. Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.**
- 4. Base your meals on high-fibre starchy foods.**
- 5. Eat a variety of foods high in protein.**
- 6. Eat some dairy foods or non-dairy sources of calcium.**
- 7. Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat these in small amounts.**
- 8. Eat less sugar.** Sugary foods include cakes, biscuits, puddings and sugary drinks.
- 9. Cut down on salt.** Eat less than 6g of salt each day. Check the labels and look out for hidden salt in processed foods, such as bread, cereals, bacon and takeaways. Avoid adding salt when you cook – try using herbs and spices to add flavour instead, or use low-salt alternatives.
- 10. Drink lots of fluids.** Try to drink around 1.5 to 2 litres (3 to 4 pints) a day, which is about 6 to 8 glasses. Water, low-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count. Avoid drinking late in the evening and drinks containing caffeine (such as tea, coffee, and cola) if you have urinary problems.

### Where can I find healthy recipes?

It's always best to speak to your doctor or a dietitian before changing your diet. Depending on your situation, the treatment you've had and your general health, you may need to eat more or less of certain foods.

Unless your doctor or dietitian recommends a specific diet, it's best to have a healthy and balanced diet. You can get some healthy recipes from:

- British Heart Foundation ([www.bhf.org.uk/healthyeatingtool](http://www.bhf.org.uk/healthyeatingtool))
- World Cancer Research Fund ([www.wcrf-uk.org/eat-well-during-cancer](http://www.wcrf-uk.org/eat-well-during-cancer))
- NHS website ([www.nhs.uk/healthyeating](http://www.nhs.uk/healthyeating))
- Macmillan Cancer Support ([www.macmillan.org.uk/recipes](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/recipes)).

You can find information on how much of what you eat should come from each food group, as well as examples of portion sizes, from:

- NHS website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk), then search for the Eatwell Guide)
- British Dietetic Association ([www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)).



**I'm eating lots more vegetables, fruit, pulses, nuts, herbs, spices and green teas. I've actually enjoyed the diet change and we have tried cooking lots of new recipes.**

*A personal experience*



## Can any foods help with my prostate cancer?

You may have heard that certain foods might help slow down the growth of prostate cancer or lower the chance of it coming back after treatment, including:

- soya beans and other pulses
- green tea
- tomatoes and lycopene (a plant chemical found in tomatoes)
- cruciferous vegetables (for example, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage)
- pomegranate.

With all of these foods, there is some evidence to suggest they might be helpful for men with prostate cancer, but other studies haven't shown any effect. This means we can't say for sure if any of these foods can help. Until there's more evidence that any individual food has an effect on prostate cancer, it's best to have a balanced diet that contains all of the food groups mentioned on page 10.

## Are there any foods I should eat less of?

You may have heard that eating a lot of certain foods may be harmful for men with prostate cancer, including:

- dairy foods and calcium
- red or processed meat
- fatty foods.

With all of these foods, some studies have suggested they might be harmful for men with prostate cancer, but other studies haven't found a link. This means we can't say for sure whether eating less of these foods can help.

There's no need to cut these foods out of your diet completely. We need more research to fully understand their effect on prostate cancer, but you can still eat most of these foods in moderate amounts as part of a healthy, balanced diet. However, the World Cancer Research Fund recommends avoiding processed meat, as it can increase your risk of some other types of cancer.

### Top tip

For the latest information on individual foods, visit our website at [prostatecanceruk.org/foods](http://prostatecanceruk.org/foods)

## Should I use supplements or herbal remedies?

Some people like to use dietary supplements or herbal remedies, but there's little evidence they're helpful for men with prostate cancer. Some may even be harmful.

### Dietary supplements

There's little evidence that supplements are helpful for men with prostate cancer. Some supplements may interfere with your treatment for prostate cancer, so let your doctor or nurse know if you're taking any.

Most people should be able to get all the nutrients they need by eating a balanced diet, without taking supplements. If you do choose to take supplements, don't take more than the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for each nutrient because large doses could be bad for your health.

Some men may need to take specific supplements.

- **Vitamin D.** Between October and March, you should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms (µg) of vitamin D. This is because during these months, there is not enough sunlight in the UK for your body to produce enough vitamin D.
- **Calcium.** If you're on hormone therapy, your doctor might recommend calcium supplements (see page 15).

### Herbal remedies

Some men like to take herbal medicines to help manage their prostate cancer or the side effects of treatment. For example, some men drink sage tea to help with hot flushes (see page 15). But there is very little evidence that herbal remedies can help to treat prostate cancer or reduce side effects.

Check the label on  
packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g LOW	1.3g LOW	34g HIGH	0.9g MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

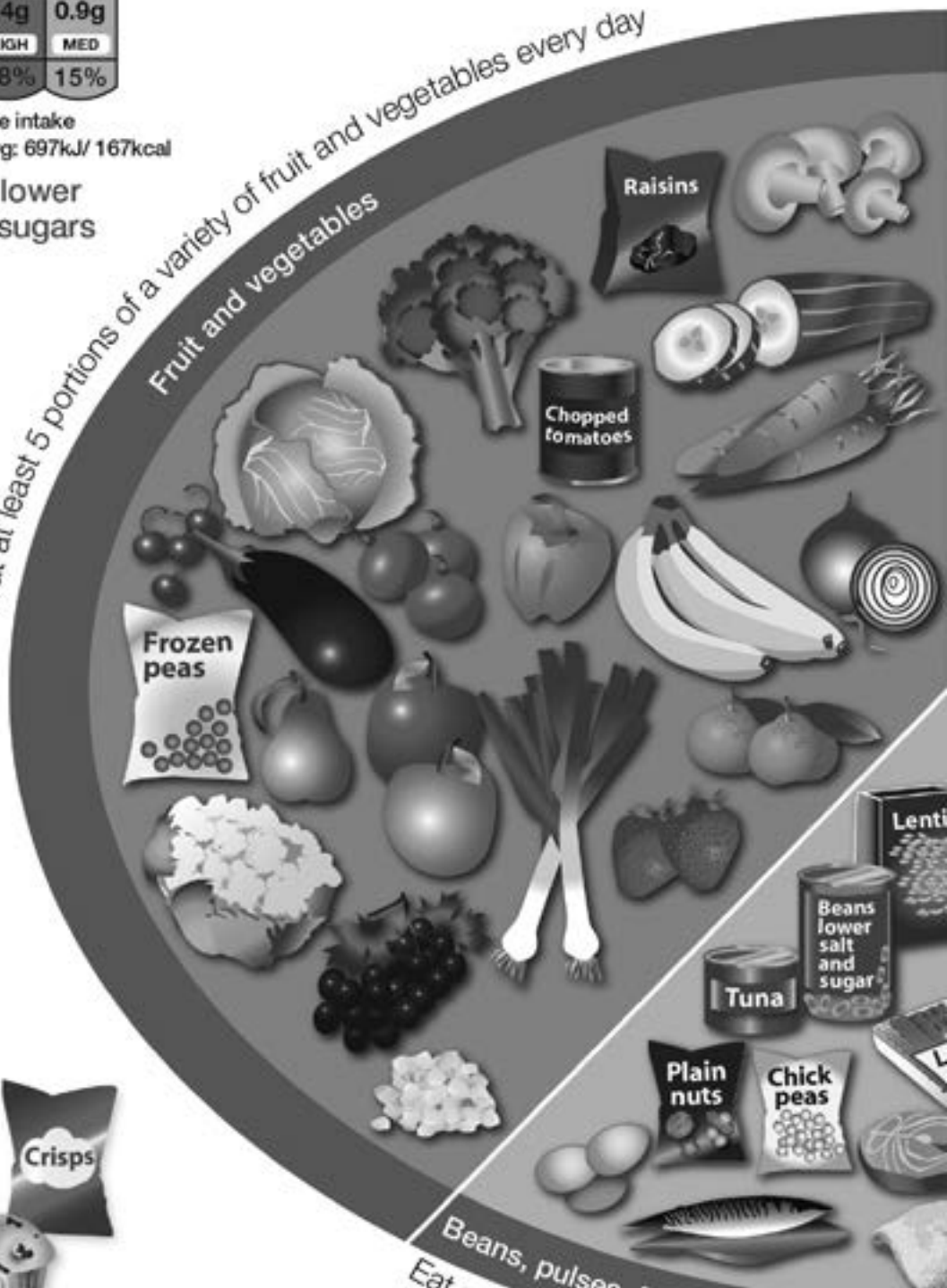
of an adult's reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower  
in fat, salt and sugars

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance  
It shows how much of what you eat overall should be

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day



Eat less often and  
in small amounts

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein  
Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions a day  
sourced fish per week, one of which is oily  
red and processed meat

# Guide

ence of healthier and more sustainable food.  
should come from each food group.



6-8  
a day

Water, lower fat  
milk, sugar-free  
drinks including  
tea and coffee  
all count.

Limit fruit juice  
and/or smoothies  
to a total of  
150ml a day.

Per day



2000kcal



2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Not all herbal remedies in the UK are licensed and the quality varies a lot. Be very careful when buying herbal remedies over the internet. Many are made outside the UK and may not be high-quality. Many companies make claims that are not based on proper research. There may be no real evidence that their products work, and some may even be harmful. Remember that even if a product is 'natural', this doesn't mean it is safe. For more information about using herbal remedies safely, visit [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk)

It's important to tell your doctor about any complementary therapies you are using, including herbal remedies. Some herbal remedies may interfere with your cancer treatment and some may affect your prostate specific antigen (PSA) level, making the PSA test unreliable.

### Herbal supplements being tested

Researchers have been looking at supplements containing a number of things such as pomegranate, green tea, broccoli, turmeric, soya and lycopene, to see whether they have an effect on prostate cancer. There have been mixed results, with some studies suggesting they may be helpful and others suggesting they don't help. These studies have all been small and run for a short time, so we need larger studies lasting for several years to find out if any supplements actually help.

## What physical activity should I do?

Physical activity plays an important role in both physical, social and emotional health. It can help you manage your weight, maintain muscle, and also help manage treatment side effects.

### There are two types of physical activity:

- **Aerobic exercises** involve using more oxygen. It helps to keep your heart healthy by increasing your heart rate and breathing. Examples of aerobic exercise include, walking, swimming, jogging, or cycling.

- **Anaerobic exercises** involve short, intense bursts of energy which help to increase muscle mass and strength. Examples of anaerobic exercise include, weight training, body weight exercises and some yoga exercises.

Any type of exercise is good for you, the main thing is to get active. However, it is important to try and incorporate both aerobic and anaerobic exercises in your daily routine.



**I found walking groups a good way to meet people. As well as making me feel good, it also meant I wasn't at home brooding.**

*A personal experience*

### How much physical activity should I do?

Everyone is different in terms of how much exercise they should and can do. This will depend on many things, including:

- the stage of your cancer
- the treatments you're having
- your strength and fitness level.

Even if you can't do a lot of physical activity, a small amount can still help. Take things at your own pace and don't do too much. Make sure you rest when you feel you need to.

Aim to be physically active at least two to three times a week. If you're not usually active, start gently for short periods of time, such as 10 to 15 minutes, and gradually exercise for longer as you become fitter. If you can, work up to 30 minutes of moderate exercise three to five days a week. Moderate exercise means your heart should beat faster but you should still be able to talk – about the level of a brisk walk. It's also important to try and include exercises that help increase muscle mass and strength, such as body weight exercises, yoga or Pilates. 30 minutes may seem like a lot, but you can reach this amount by being active for 10 minutes, three times a day.

It's usually safe for men with prostate cancer, and those having treatment, to be physically active. But it's still a good idea to speak to your GP, nurse or hospital doctor before you start any kind of exercise plan, especially if you have other health problems, such as heart disease or problems with your joints or muscles. They can talk to you about exercising safely and may refer you to an exercise programme or a physiotherapist who can help you plan your exercise.

If you're on hormone therapy or have cancer that has spread to the bones, check with your doctor before doing high-impact exercises such as running and contact sports.



**After a brisk walk I feel energised and healthy. When I'm walking as fast as I can I forget about my worries.**

*A personal experience*

#### **Tips for getting active**

- Walking, swimming, cycling and gardening are all good exercise.
- You can do simple things, such as getting off the bus one stop earlier, or using stairs rather than a lift.
- You can even exercise from your chair or bed. Lifting and stretching your arms and legs can help improve your movement and muscle strength. Visit the [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well) for exercises to do while sitting down.
- If you're trying to be more active, an exercise programme such as walking 10,000 steps a day can be useful. You might not manage this at first – just do what you can, and try to walk a little further each day. Visit the [www.nhs.co.uk/livewell](http://www.nhs.co.uk/livewell) to find out more.

- Gentle resistance exercise, such as lifting light weights or using elastic resistance bands, is particularly good if you're on hormone therapy and are at risk of bone thinning (see page 15).
- Try a variety of activities or sports so that you don't get bored, and set some goals to aim for. You may prefer to exercise with a friend or in a group.
- If you find an activity you enjoy that fits into your life, you're more likely to keep doing it.

#### **Can I exercise after surgery?**

If you're having surgery to remove your prostate, you'll need to take it easy for the first few weeks after your operation. Your surgeon may suggest taking a short walk each day, starting on the day after your operation. It's important to only do light and gentle exercise so that your body has time to heal properly.

You should avoid any heavy physical activity for the first six to eight weeks. If possible, avoid climbing too many stairs, lifting heavy objects or doing manual work during this time. Talk to your doctor or nurse about what's safe for you and when.



### Exercise safely

- Be careful to avoid activities where you could fall, especially if you're on hormone therapy or your cancer has spread to the bones. This is because you're more likely to break a bone if you fall.
- Wear clothing and trainers that fit properly, and don't exercise on uneven surfaces, to avoid tripping over.
- Make sure you drink enough water.
- Don't exercise if you feel unwell, or have any pain, sickness or other unusual symptoms. Stop if you get any of these while exercising.
- If you're having chemotherapy or radiotherapy and have any skin irritation, check with your doctor or nurse if it's safe for you to go swimming, as chlorine can make this worse.
- If you're overweight or have heart problems, check what type of exercise is safe for you with your doctor or nurse.

### How can I find opportunities to be active?

- **Local exercise classes.** There are lots of types of exercise classes in local and private sport centres. Look for classes that are the right level for you and think about trying something new, like Tai Chi, yoga or badminton. Find somewhere to exercise near you at [prostatecanceruk.org/get-active](http://prostatecanceruk.org/get-active)
- **Local authority gyms.** County councils often have gyms that are affordable and instructors who are qualified to work with people who have cancer. Some also provide small group sessions for people with cancer.

- **Exercise referral schemes.** These are special exercise programmes for people with health problems, including prostate cancer. They are run by healthcare professionals or fitness trainers who have experience of working with people who have health problems. Ask your GP about schemes in your area.
- **Local walking groups.** These are a chance to be sociable and outdoors, and there's no need to tell anyone about your cancer if you don't want to. Find walks and walking groups at [prostatecanceruk.org/walking-options](http://prostatecanceruk.org/walking-options)
- **Ramblers.** Ramblers organises free group walks around the country. Visit [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk) to find your nearest group.
- **Couch to 5K.** This is an NHS running programme for beginners. The plan includes tips to help you slowly get up to running five kilometres in nine weeks. Visit [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise)
- **Maggie's.** Maggie's offer free exercise classes around the country for people who've had cancer. Visit [www.maggies.org](http://www.maggies.org) for details.
- **Macmillan Cancer Support.** Macmillan has a range of resources to help you get active, and runs exercise groups around the country. Visit [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- **NHS website.** This website has lots of information about the benefits of exercise, ideas for being more active and tips for exercising safely. Visit [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise)

## How can a healthy lifestyle help with the side effects of treatment?

All treatments for prostate cancer can cause side effects. There are treatments available to help manage these, and diet and physical activity can help too.

### Weight gain

Some men put on weight while they are on hormone therapy, particularly around the waist. Being active and eating well can help. But if you're struggling to lose weight, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian or weight-loss programme.

### Heart disease and diabetes

Hormone therapy may increase your risk of heart disease and type-2 diabetes. A healthy diet and being active can help prevent them.

### Bone thinning

Being on hormone therapy for a long time can gradually make your bones weaker. This is known as bone thinning. It can lead to a condition called osteoporosis, where the bones become weak and are more likely to break (fracture). A number of lifestyle changes may help to keep your bones healthy.

Calcium and vitamin D are important for strong bones. See page 6 for more information on calcium. Most of your vitamin D is made inside the body when your skin is exposed to sunlight. But it can be difficult for your body to make enough vitamin D from sunlight alone, especially in winter. You can also get vitamin D from eating oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel and sardines, or foods with added vitamin D, like margarine and some breakfast cereals. You may need to take calcium and vitamin D supplements to help lower your risk of bone thinning – speak to your doctor about this.

Drinking a lot of alcohol and smoking can both raise your risk of bone thinning or osteoporosis. See page 4 for ways to get support with drinking less alcohol and giving up smoking.

We don't yet know whether exercise can help to prevent bone thinning in men who are on hormone therapy. But regular physical activity could help to keep you strong and prevent falls that could cause broken bones. These types of exercises may be particularly helpful:

- **gentle resistance exercise**, such as lifting light weights or using elastic resistance bands
- **weight-bearing exercise**, where you're standing up and have to support your own weight, such as walking, climbing stairs, tennis and dancing.

### Strength and muscle loss

Hormone therapy can cause a loss of muscle tissue so that you feel less physically strong. Regular, gentle resistance exercise, such as lifting light weights, can help with muscle loss and keep your muscles strong.

### Hot flushes

Hot flushes are a common side effect of hormone therapy. Staying a healthy weight may help you manage hot flushes. Try to cut down on spicy foods, alcohol and drinks that contain caffeine, such as tea and coffee.

Some men use herbal remedies to help manage their hot flushes, such as sage tea or supplements containing black cohosh. There is no scientific evidence that these are effective and some, including black cohosh, may be harmful. Speak to your doctor before taking any herbal remedies.

### Extreme tiredness (fatigue)

Some treatments for prostate cancer, including hormone therapy, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, can cause extreme tiredness. Light to moderate exercise, such as walking or swimming, can make you feel more awake. And doing this type of exercise along with strength training, such as lifting light weights, may be even more effective.

If your treatment is making you feel tired, you may find it hard to be active. Try to plan activities at times when you usually have more energy. If you feel particularly tired, just do gentle exercise for a short time and take lots of breaks.

You can even exercise from your chair or bed – for example, use a resistance band to help you lift and stretch your arms and legs.



Read more about ways to manage fatigue in our fact sheet, **Fatigue and prostate cancer**.



You can also speak to our Specialist Nurses about your fatigue. They can help you make lifestyle changes that should improve your fatigue over time. Visit [prostatecanceruk.org/fatigue](https://prostatecanceruk.org/fatigue) to find out more.



**Exercise has definitely helped me reduce my fatigue as I get to sleep more easily now. I keep a diary of walks to make sure I'm getting enough exercise.**

*A personal experience*

### **Anxiety and depression**

Many men with prostate cancer feel anxious and sad at times. If you're feeling low in mood, sad most of the time or your sleep pattern or appetite has changed, this could be a sign of depression. Many people with depression also experience anxiety. Symptoms of anxiety may include feeling irritable, constant feeling of dread or shortness of breath. Some treatments for prostate cancer, such as hormone therapy and chemotherapy, can also cause depression and mood swings.

Regular physical activity can often help you deal with feelings of anxiety and depression and improve your day to day life. Learning ways to relax, such as yoga or meditation, might also help.

### **Bowel problems**

If you're having radiotherapy, you may get bowel problems during and after treatment. These might include loose and watery bowel movements (diarrhoea). Eating less fibre, fat and dairy for a short time might help with this, although the evidence for this isn't very strong.

High-fibre foods to avoid include fruits and vegetables. Stick with low-fibre foods which include white rice, pasta and bread, potatoes without the skins, cornmeal, eggs and lean white meat. Make sure you drink lots of water to replace the liquid your body is losing.

If you find you're bloated or passing more wind than usual, there are certain foods you can try avoiding. These include beans, pulses, cruciferous vegetables (for example, cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower), onions, fizzy drinks and beer. Some people find that adding certain herbs or spices to their cooking, such as ginger, peppermint or dill, can help as well.

You should speak to your GP or doctor about managing your diet. They can refer you to a dietitian for expert advice. This is because it's important that you continue to eat a range of different food groups.


If you're taking pain-relieving tablets, these can cause constipation (difficulty having a bowel movement). Try to drink lots of fluids – aim for about two litres (eight glasses) a day. If you don't want to drink water, you could have other drinks such as squash with no added sugar, decaffeinated tea and coffee. Or you could flavour your water, for example with cucumber or fresh mint. Some men find drinking warm or hot water a few times a day helps. Try to eat high-fibre foods such as wholemeal bread, porridge and fruits, in particular prunes.

Gentle exercise may also help with constipation. If things don't improve, speak to your doctor. They may give you a medicine called a laxative to help empty your bowels.

### Urinary problems


Some treatments for prostate cancer can cause difficulty urinating (peeing). Making some changes to your lifestyle could help. Try to drink plenty of fluids – 1.5 to 2 litres (3 to 4 pints) a day. But cut down on fizzy drinks, alcohol and drinks that contain caffeine – like tea, coffee and cola – as these can irritate the bladder. And avoid drinking a lot late in the day to avoid having to get up in the night.

Try to be active and stay a healthy weight, and avoid constipation (see page 16) as this puts pressure on the pelvic floor muscles and bladder, making urinary problems worse. If you smoke, try to stop because coughing also puts pressure on the pelvic floor muscles.


 Read more about urinary problems and how to manage them in our fact sheets, **Urinary problems after prostate cancer treatment** and **Pelvic floor muscle exercises**.

### Changes to your sex life

Lifestyle changes, such as staying a healthy weight and being physically active, can help improve your sex life. Hormone therapy, for example, can cause changes to your sex life, including problems getting an erection and loss of desire for sex (low libido). But regular exercise may help you to feel more desire for sex, improve your self-esteem, reduce anxiety and give you more energy.

 For information about sexual problems, treatments, and support, read our booklet, **Prostate cancer and your sex life**.

For more information on the side effects of treatments for prostate cancer, including ways to manage them, read our other fact sheets or visit **prostatecanceruk.org**

 If you're having hormone therapy, read our booklet, **Living with hormone therapy: A guide for men with prostate cancer**.



**Being physically active helps to look after my body, my mind and my emotions.**

*A personal experience*

# Questions to ask your doctor or nurse



You may find it helpful to keep a note of any questions you have to take to your next appointment.

Are there any foods or supplements I should avoid during my treatment?

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Are there any foods or supplements that might help with my side effects?

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Are there any complementary therapies I should avoid with my treatment?

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Are there any types of physical activity that would be particularly good for me?

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Are there any types of physical activity I should avoid?

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Are there any activity groups I can join?

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What other support is available?

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## More information

### British Dietetic Association

[www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)

**Telephone: 0121 200 8080**

Information about a healthy diet and how to find a registered dietitian.

### British Nutrition Foundation

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

**Telephone: 020 7557 7930**

Information on a healthy diet and how diet may be linked to cancer.

### Macmillan Cancer Support

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

**Telephone: 0808 808 0000**

Practical, financial and emotional support for people with cancer, their family and friends.

### Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

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

**Telephone: 020 3080 6000**

Advice about how to use herbal remedies safely. Also runs the Yellow Card Scheme, a system to report unusual side effects from any treatment.

### NHS Website

[www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well)

Advice, tips and tools about health and wellbeing, including information about exercise and how to eat healthily.

### NHS Smokefree

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

Information and support to help people stop smoking.

### Penny Brohn UK

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

**Telephone: 0303 3000 118**

Runs courses and offers physical, emotional and spiritual support for people with cancer and those close to them.

### World Cancer Research Fund

[www.wcrf-uk.org](http://www.wcrf-uk.org)

**Telephone: 020 7343 4205**

Funds research and provides information on diet and exercise to reduce the risk of cancer.

## About us

Prostate Cancer UK has a simple ambition: to stop men dying from prostate cancer – by driving improvements in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and support.

Download and order our fact sheets and booklets from our website at **[prostatecanceruk.org/publications](http://prostatecanceruk.org/publications)** or call us on **0800 074 8383**.

At Prostate Cancer UK, we take great care to provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. 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 fact sheet are available at **[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)**

**This publication was written and edited by** our Health Information team.

### It was reviewed by:

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- Dr Ruth Ashton, Lecturer in Exercise Physiology, University of Derby
- Our Specialist Nurses
- Our volunteers.

### Tell us what you think

If you have any comments about our publications, you can email:

**[yourfeedback@prostatecanceruk.org](mailto:yourfeedback@prostatecanceruk.org)**



**Speak to our  
Specialist Nurses**

**0800 074 8383\***

**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, over 47,000 men face a prostate cancer diagnosis. 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.

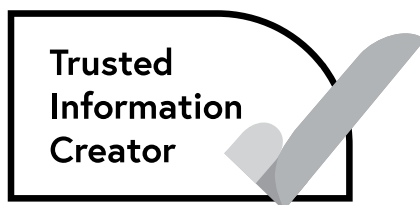
To make a donation of any amount, please call us on **0800 082 1616**, visit **prostatecanceruk.org/donate** or text **PROSTATE** to **70004**<sup>†</sup>.

There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit **prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved**

<sup>†</sup> 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/terms](https://prostatecanceruk.org/terms)



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**Call our Specialist Nurses from Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, Wednesday 10am - 5pm**

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

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