

Ask the CIS – April 2007

Q: What questions should I ask my doctor about the results of my prostate biopsy?

A: The prostate is part of a man's reproductive system. It is located in front of the rectum and under the bladder. For a biopsy, small tissue samples are taken directly from the prostate. The doctor looks at the tissue under a microscope.

Most men who have biopsies after routine exams do not have cancer. You may want to ask your doctor the following questions about the results of your prostate biopsy:

- What type of prostate problem do I have? Is it cancer?
- Do I need other tests?
- What treatment do you suggest?
- How often should I visit the doctor to check my condition?

For more information about prostate changes, call the NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. You can ask for a free copy of the NCI booklet *Understanding Prostate Changes: A Health Guide for Men*. You can also find it at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/understanding-prostate-changes> on the NCI's Web site.

The National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS) is one of the country's most trusted resources. Ask the CIS is distributed by the Rocky Mountain Region CIS, which serves AZ, CO, MT, NM, UT, and WY. Call the CIS toll-free at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237) between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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Q: I'm having radiation therapy soon. What are some of the common side effects?

A: Radiation therapy (RAY-dee-AY-shun THAYR-uh-pee) uses high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. Radiation may come from a machine outside the body, or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells.

The side effects of radiation therapy depend mainly on the type of therapy, the dose, and the part of the body that is treated. For example, radiation to the lung can cause coughing or shortness of breath. Your skin in the treated area may become red, dry, and tender.

You also may lose your hair in the area that was treated.

You are likely to become very tired, especially in the later weeks of treatment. Resting is important, but stay as active as you can.

Most side effects of radiation treatment are well known. With the help of your doctor and nurse, they are easily treated. Your doctor or nurse will also tell you how to take care of yourself at home.

For more information about radiation therapy, call the NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. You can ask for a free copy of the NCI booklet *Radiation Therapy and You: A Guide to Self-Help During Treatment*. You can also find it at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/radiation-therapy-and-you> on the NCI's Web site.

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Q: What are the symptoms of bladder cancer?

A: The bladder, located in the lower abdomen, is the organ that stores urine. When cancer forms in the bladder, it can cause symptoms. Common symptoms include:

- Blood in the urine (making the urine slightly rusty to deep red)
- Pain during urination
- Frequent urination, or feeling the need to urinate without results

These symptoms are not sure signs of bladder cancer. Other problems also can cause these symptoms. Anyone with these symptoms should see a doctor. The doctor can diagnose and treat any problem as early as possible. People with symptoms like these may see their family doctor or a urologist (yoo-RAHL-o-jist), a doctor who specializes in diseases of the urinary system.

For more information about bladder cancer, call the NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. You can also find information on the NCI's Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/bladder>.

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Q: How can I take care of myself during chemotherapy?

A: Chemotherapy (KEE-moh-THAYR-uh-pee) is treatment with drugs that kill cancer cells. Here are a few ways you can help yourself:

- Tell your doctor if you get side effects from the drugs.
- Ask your doctor before you take any other medicine.
- Eat the right foods to build up your strength.
- Stay away from people who have colds.
- Get the rest you need.

For more information about chemotherapy, call the NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. You can ask for a free copy of the NCI booklet *Chemotherapy and You: A Guide to Self-Help During Cancer Treatment*. You can also find it at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/chemotherapy-and-you/> on the NCI's Web site.

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