

The moustache movement: knowing the symptoms of prostate cancer

Dr Tim Lebens, Private GP at The Wellington Hospital, explains how easy it is to know the signs and seek treatment

It's that time of year when the streets display a noticeable increase in men sporting 'the handlebar', 'the connoisseur' and the standard curly moustache. Movember is upon us. For 2013, the men's health charity has created a new movement this year called Generation Mo with the intention of building up a group of 'positive revolutionaries' who will help influence the improving attitudes towards men's health. These groups of fundraisers

will be the driving force behind the health programmes for changing men's attitudes, highlighting areas such as testicular and prostate cancer. Prostate Cancer UK and the Institute of Cancer Research are some of the main benefactors of the Movember movement.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, even though only a proportion of tumours go on to become aggressive or 'high risk'. A man's lifetime chance of getting prostate cancer is one in eight, with more than 100 cases identified every day. Cases are most common in men over the age of 65 but more aggressive in younger men, proving the importance of education for prostate health.

The prostate is a walnut-sized organ, which is situated beneath the bladder and responsible for producing semen. Over the age of 60, the prostate begins to enlarge and can lead to a benign growth or possible cancer, with or without symptoms.

The prostate surrounds the tube you pass urine through and if occluded in any way, could cause some of the following urinary symptoms:

- ☞ Hesitancy before urinating
- ☞ Weaker stream
- ☞ Needing to rush to the toilet
- ☞ Dribbling after passing
- ☞ Going more frequently, or regularly getting up in the night to go

In addition to this, symptoms can include blood in the urine or semen, a reduced ability to get an erection and painful ejaculation. These symptoms may also be related to other conditions and should always be investigated further.

Which tests and treatments are available for prostate cancer?

There are a number of tests available for diagnosing prostate cancer:

- ☞ **A prostate-specific antigen (PSA)** is a blood test is taken to check the amount of PSA (produced by both normal and cancerous prostate cells) in a sample of your blood.
- ☞ **A digital rectal examination (DRE)** enables your doctor to feel your prostate through the wall of your rectum.
- ☞ **A prostate biopsy** is a surgical procedure taking a small piece of tissue using a needle.
- ☞ **A PCA3Plus™ test**, a urine-based molecular test for patients who have elevated PSA and a negative biopsy result.

Treatment options for prostate cancer are usually on a case-by-case basis, with all possibilities explained to you by your GP or consultant.

Options include: monitoring, hormone therapy, surgery and radiotherapy with success rates based on how advanced the cancer has become, prompt diagnosis and how soon treatment is started.

How can I reduce my risk?

Although there are no known preventative methods to stop the development of prostate cancer, there are some steps you can take to lower your risk. A healthy lifestyle is pivotal to maintain optimal health and to reduce your chance of being diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Some studies suggest that diets high in green tea, tomatoes (lycopene), certain nuts and fish (selenium) and green vegetables may help reduce risk rates. In conjunction with these findings, there are some food groups, comprising of dairy, processed and red meats, and saturated fats, which may increase the possibility of getting prostate cancer.

Contrary to popular belief, there are no supplements shown to be protective against the cancer and some may even be harmful. A recent report has shown that high levels of vitamin E can actually increase your risk of prostate cancer.

The most important form of preventative method is education. Symptoms can often be the first indication and seeking medical advice should not be delayed. You may also want to investigate your family medical history as there is a genetic risk, particularly in first-degree relatives diagnosed with prostate (and even breast) cancer. Through improving knowledge and raising awareness, the number of prostate cancer cases can be significantly reduced and more lives saved each year. ☑

For further information or if you would like to arrange an appointment at The Wellington Hospital, please contact the hospital Enquiry Helpline on 020 7483 5004 or visit thewellingtonhospital.com

For more information on prostate cancer please visit uk.movember.com and prostateuk.com

MEET THE SPECIALIST

Dr Tim Lebens BM, DFFP, MRCP is a Private GP at The Wellington Hospital's Platinum Medical Centre in St John's Wood. He trained at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington and has also worked in psychiatry at The Priory Hospital, London. His special interests include sexual medicine, psychiatry and general medicine.