

## Prostate cancer: It's a Man Thing!

This factsheet is designed to

- Highlight some relevant workplace health and safety issues
- Raise awareness of new campaigns on prostate cancer
- Give guidance on a negotiating and campaigning agenda

A safe and healthy workplace and environment will make a crucial difference. Unite safety representatives, shop stewards, learning reps and Equality reps are in a unique position to press for improvements.

### Prostate cancer facts

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men and it accounts for over a quarter of all cancers in men in the UK.

In the UK, over 47,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year – that is 130 new cases every day. There has been a 16% increase over the last 10 years.

1 in 4 black African-Caribbean and black African men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in the UK – that's double the overall 1 in 8 risk faced by all men in the UK.

Prostate cancer mainly affects men over the age of 50 and risk increases with age. Black men are increasingly being diagnosed from age 40.

Men are at higher risk of developing prostate cancer if there is a family history of prostate or breast cancer. Men with one close relative (father, mother, brother, sister) diagnosed with breast or prostate cancer have twice the risk; 2 close relatives, 3 times more likely; one relative under 60 years on diagnosis, 4 times; 1 relative under 60 and died from it, 8 times.

In the UK more than 10,500 men die from prostate cancer each year – one man dies every hour, accounting for 13% of all male deaths.

Early detection may prevent death from prostate cancer although there are few symptoms at early stage.



### Fact

**25%**

Prostate cancer makes up a quarter of all cancer cases in men

### Fact

**16%**

Increase in prostate cancer incidence over the last 10 years

### Fact

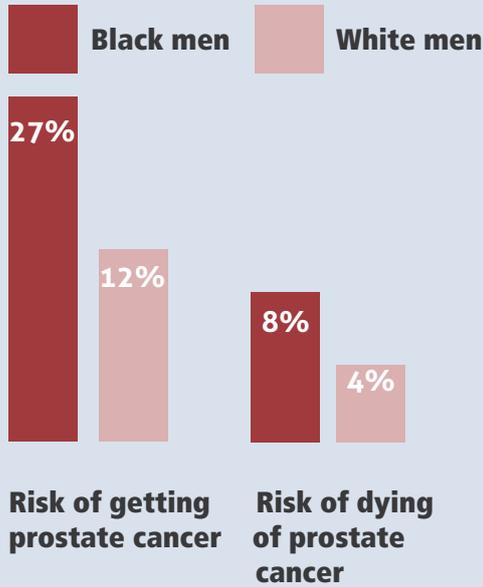
**13%**

of all male cancer deaths are from prostate cancer - making it the most common cause of death



## Fact

### DOUBLE THE RISK



## Fact

**19%**  
of prostate cancer cases diagnosed at an advanced stage (defined as stage iv) are in black men

## Fact

Prostate cancer accounts for **22%** of cancer deaths in black men

## Unite campaigns on cancer

### Occupational cancers

According to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) research, past occupational exposure to known and probable carcinogens (such as asbestos, diesel engine exhaust emissions and silica) is estimated to account for about 5% of cancer deaths and 4% of cancer registrations currently occurring each year in Britain.

This equates to about 8,000 cancer deaths and 13,500 new cancer registrations each year.

Unite is determined to prevent the painful illness and deaths resulting from exposures to these substances and from other occupational hazards such as shift work.

### Unite Policy (2014 policy Conference)

#### Cancer Services

Unite is concerned that cuts to our health service will impact on resources for cancer prevention, its treatment and early diagnosis.

Unite is committed to:

- Launch a national campaign for free cancer screening for all regardless of their age;
- Expose any attempts to reduce funding and proactively work against the cuts;
- Continue raising H&S awareness for cancer prevention and early detection;
- Encourage employers to put in place screening programmes for their employees;
- Retain and improve services for the effective treatment.

### Prostate Cancer It's a Man Thing

Unite has joined with Tackle Prostate and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham in the **Prostate Cancer It's a Man Thing** campaign. This is a fundraising project to raise awareness amongst men that they need to "check it out" and "talk about it" through music and awareness raising campaigns in workplaces, communities, trade unions. They are hoping to sponsor a "Man-Van" which may include the latest high-tech scanners and are supporting the development of Men's Health Buses to visit workplaces and communities to raise awareness and provide health screening.

## Some risk factors for cancer:

### We can use our rights at work to help prevent cancer

- The employer should not only provide appropriate protective clothing free of charge, but also ensure that workers are made aware that it is advisable to wash their hands more frequently, for example before using the toilet, to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Many members do not have easy access to toilet facilities at work. This is essential for men who are having treatment for prostate cancer and one key symptom is urgency to urinate - urinary retention is another risk factor.
- Night shift work may increase the risk of cancer and other ill health.
- Black African and Afro-Caribbean men are twice as likely to get prostate cancer than other men, and have worse outcomes on diagnosis, often at younger age.
- We don't know how to prevent prostate cancer, but a healthy diet and lifestyle may be important. Eating healthily and being active can help you stay a healthy weight. This may mean that you are less likely to be diagnosed with aggressive or advanced prostate cancer. A healthy lifestyle can also improve your general wellbeing and reduce your risk of other health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and some other cancers.
- Family history is a risk factor – see above.

## What is the prostate?

It is a small walnut-shaped gland which lies at the base of the bladder and surrounds the urethra which is tube that carries urine out of the body. It may get larger as men get older and restrict the flow of urine, resulting in the need to empty the bladder more frequently.

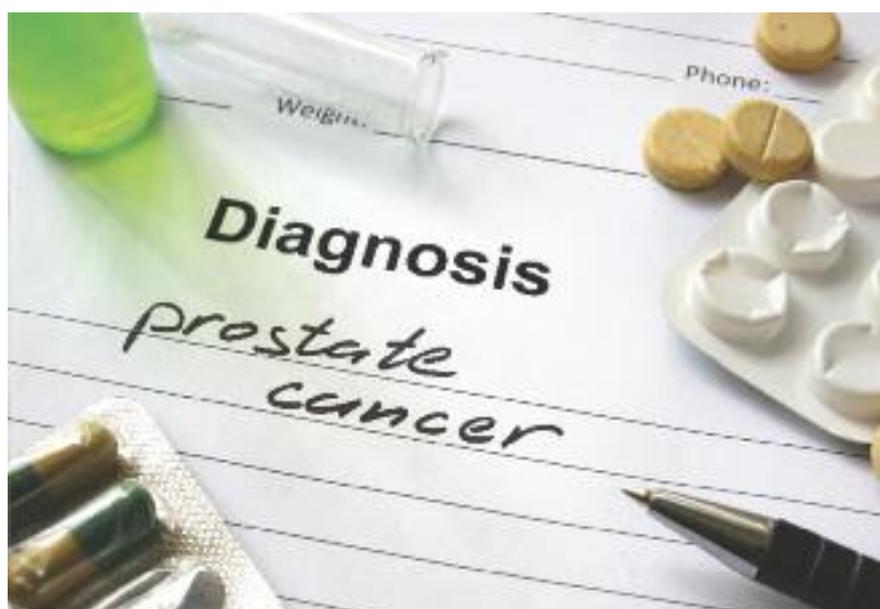
This is a common condition called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). This, and another condition called prostatitis, though they are not cancer will have some of the symptoms of prostate cancer.

## What are the signs and symptoms of prostate cancer?

- Having to rush to the toilet to pass urine.
- Frequent visits to the toilet especially at night.
- Starting and stopping when urinating.
- Dribbling of urine.
- Feeling that you have not emptied your bladder fully.

Some less common symptoms are:

- Blood in the urine or semen.
- Impotence.
- Pain in the back, hips or pelvis.



## If you do notice symptoms, see your doctor as soon as possible.

And be aware that sometimes there are no symptoms – this is why Unite believes we need a national screening programme.

## Testing for prostate cancer

There is no national screening programme. England and Scotland follow the Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP) guidelines (see Further information). NHS Choices advises that there is no single test for prostate cancer.

## PSA Test

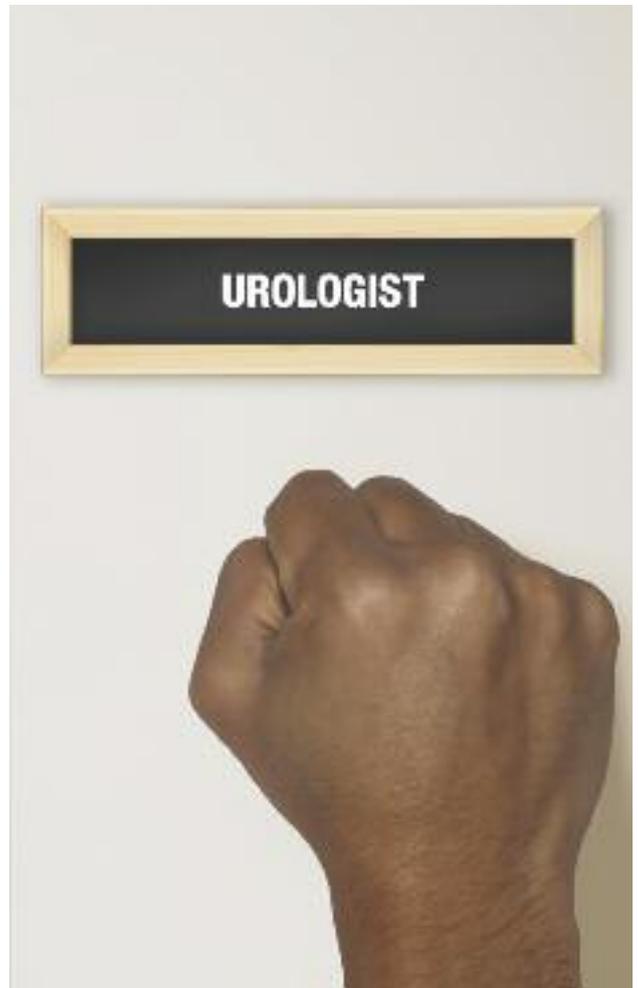
One method is the PSA test. This is a blood test that can detect the early signs of an enlarged prostate. It is the most common initial test for men who are worried about prostate cancer.

The test, which can be done at a GP surgery, measures the level of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in your blood.

Any asymptomatic man aged 50 or over can make an appointment with their GP to discuss having a PSA test. Men aged 50 or over who decide to have a PSA test based on this balanced information can do for free on the NHS.

PSA is a protein made only by the prostate gland. Some of it will leak into your blood, and the amount depends on your age and the health of your prostate.

A raised PSA level in your blood may be a sign of prostate cancer. However, other conditions, such as an enlarged prostate, prostatitis, or a urinary infection, can also cause a raised PSA level.



The PSA test is not accurate enough to meet the requirements of a national screening programme. A raised PSA level can mean a man has prostate cancer, but the PSA test can also miss cancer.

But PSA testing is most valuable when carried out on an annual basis since a series of tests can reveal whose PSA is rising rapidly.

There is a strong argument for a national screening programme but in the meantime we need to negotiate access to health screening in the workplace.

## Legal protection

Unite workplace representatives should be aware that there is legal protection - which is relevant to prostate cancer under health and safety and equality legislation.

## Equality Act 2010

Be aware that most people with cancer are covered by the Equality Act 2010. The definition of a disabled person in this Act has the effect of covering people

- who have had cancer (in the past)
- who would have symptoms if they were not receiving medical treatment for them.

## Health and safety at work

No Unite leaflet about cancer can fail to mention health and safety legislation, which requires employers to provide safe and healthy workplaces.

This includes in particular the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). COSHH impose a range of duties on employers to protect workers' health and safety from the presence of or use of hazardous chemical agents (as well as biological agents). Strict control of substances or work processes which may cause cancer is essential and employers should always try to use a less harmful substance or process.

Employers must comply with their duties to provide adequate washing and toilet facilities for their employees.

In addition to chemical hazards there is limited research which suggests a link with shift work and prostate cancer.

## Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977

Unite safety representatives can use their rights to consultation, investigation, representation, information, and training to negotiate better occupational health provision as well as to help prevent accidents and injury in the workplace. This could include awareness-raising training about prostate cancer and its prevention.

Safety reps should always use their rights to information and consultation to ask for the material safety data sheet of chemicals or preparations being used in work and to be involved in risk assessments, which are a legal requirement under COSHH.



# Action list for safety representatives and equality representatives

**Unite safety reps and equality reps can work together with Union Learning Reps to take action on cancer prevention and promote health awareness. This includes developing policies, improving working hours and facilities and preventing exposures. Any policy should apply to all workers regardless of age, employee status, hours worked, length of service, etc.**

- Work with your employer to ensure that they are complying with health and safety legislation – for example carrying out risk assessments, controlling (and preferably preventing) exposure to hazardous substances, substituting hazardous substances with safer alternatives, providing copies of data sheets for chemicals and other relevant documents, and consulting Unite safety representatives.
- Negotiate working hours that allow for adequate toilet breaks and access to facilities.
- If you do shift work ensure that your employer carries out and implements risk assessments in relation to the shift patterns.
- Negotiate improved occupational health provision – a good OH department should be concerned about preventing injuries and ill-health. This could include providing workplace-based NHS screening facilities and counselling for workers having screening or who have been diagnosed with a problem. The process must of course be confidential and the results of any screening should not be detrimental to job/career prospects.
- Negotiate time off with pay for medical appointments, for regular cancer and other screening for men and women and for treatment, scans and follow up appointments.
- Ensure that your sickness absence policy is not discriminatory – it should comply with the Equality Act 2010. Negotiate disability related leave (eg for cancer treatment) as part of the policy which is not counted towards sickness absence.
- Campaign and organise for health awareness buses (eg ManVans) to come into workplaces and community venues.
- Ask your employer to help raise awareness in the workplace. You could use the It's a Man Thing music and campaign.
- Bear in mind that cancer often has multiple causes – talk to your employer about improvements in workplace conditions eg reducing stress at work and introducing flexible working, healthy eating options in the staff canteen, providing paid time for workers to attend smoking cessation programmes.



## What else can you do?

- Campaign for improved NHS screening services – lobby your MP, the Secretary of State for Health, your local Health Trust and local councillors.
- Promote health awareness through your Branch – invite a speaker on men's health (see further information for contact details) promote It's a Man Thing CD and music events.



## Personal Injury Claims

Members may be able to claim compensation for personal injury if they are diagnosed with a cancer which can be shown to be linked to their work.

Strict time limits apply to all legal cases and members should contact union solicitors for advice without delay by calling Unite's free legal helpline

**0800 709 007**



## Further information

**Unite website** – [www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)

### **Unite health and safety unit**

Email [healthandsafety@unitetheunion.org](mailto:healthandsafety@unitetheunion.org)

Phone: 020 7611 2596

### **Unite health and safety resources**

This includes the Unite Health and Safety Guide, and guidance on a range of subjects including silica, diesel engine exhaust emissions, shift work and night work, women's health and safety and "It's time for a toilet break".

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/unite-at-work/healthsafety/>

### **Unite equality guidance – disability equality**

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/uploaded/documents/DisabilityEqualit%20NegotiatorsGuide11-12244.pdf>

### **Health and Safety Executive occupational cancer website and guidance**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/cancer/index.htm>

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission – disability discrimination**

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/your-rights/equal-rights/disability-discrimination>

### **Cancer Research UK** – Information on latest research, support, facts etc

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

### **Tackle** – Umbrella charity for Prostate Cancer Support Groups [www.tackleprostate.org](http://www.tackleprostate.org)

### **NHS Choices** – [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Macmillan Cancer Relief** – helping people live with cancer [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### **Prostate Cancer UK** – [www.prostatecanceruk.org](http://www.prostatecanceruk.org)

This is the leading prostate cancer charity with extensive information about prostate cancer and related awareness raising activities. A visit to the website is strongly recommended.

### **Cancer Equality Charity** – advice, information and supporting needs for BME communities. "Hear me Now" report on improving care for black African and African-Caribbean men with prostate cancer [www.cancerequality.co.uk](http://www.cancerequality.co.uk)

### **BME Cancer support group** – produced the "Hear me now" report. [www.bmecancer.com](http://www.bmecancer.com)

### **Men's Health Forum** – a voluntary organisation working to improve male health and well-being in England and Wales.

Promotes Men's Health Week which takes place in June each year. [www.menshealthforum.org.uk](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk)

There are separate webpages for Scotland and a separate website for Ireland [www.mhfi.org](http://www.mhfi.org)

### **Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP)**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prostate-cancer-risk-management-programme-overview>

### **It's a Man Thing Campaign**

Download the music from any on line music store, see the short animation, find out about music events and further information on the prostate cancer awareness and ManVan campaigns.

[www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/about/centres/crc/forpatients/itsamanthing](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/about/centres/crc/forpatients/itsamanthing)

