



Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions

An information sheet for consumers and the community

What is a novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The virus causes the respiratory disease known as COVID-19 (COronaVirus Disease 2019). Symptoms include fever, coughing, a sore throat and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person, but good hygiene can prevent infection.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The common signs include a fever (37.3°C or higher), cough, sore throat, fatigue, or shortness of breath.

If you have any of these symptoms, phone your doctor or state health service immediately and seek advice.

What can I do to protect myself?

To protect yourself and others from infection practice good hand and respiratory hygiene including:

- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid contact with anyone who has symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath.
- If you have to go out to buy groceries or medicine, stay at least 1.5 metres away from others, and especially anyone who has symptoms.
- Stay home and follow the advice of authorities.

How could I become infected with novel coronavirus?

Novel coronavirus is transmitted from person to person, usually when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

If you begin to exhibit any symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue, and breathing difficulties, then you should contact your GP or call your local or state health authority.

Are men impacted by prostate cancer more at risk of novel coronavirus?

People of all ages can be affected by the novel coronavirus. However, elderly people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill.

Prostate cancer survivors and men undergoing treatment for prostate cancer may have a higher than average risk and it's vitally important to minimise your risks of exposure to COVID-19.

Your individual vulnerability will depend on a range of factors such as your overall health and well-being, your age, your environment, your genes, and any other health conditions.

If you have any questions about your susceptibility, call your GP and ask about how to manage your personal risks, and keep following the advice of health authorities.



I have been diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer, am I more vulnerable?

Your individual vulnerability will depend on a range of factors such as your overall health and well-being, your age, your environment, your genes, and any other health conditions.

In terms of your diagnosis, early-stage prostate cancer has not been shown to significantly affect your immune system and your ability to fight infection. Unlike some blood cancers, early prostate cancer does not affect the ability of your T cells and B cells (the cells that rule your immune system) to fight viral and bacterial infections, which is good news.

I am on hormone therapy, what should I do?

At this stage, we have no evidence to suggest that hormone therapy will weaken your immune response to COVID-19 and you should continue to follow the advice of your doctor and treatment team.

I have advanced prostate cancer, am I at risk?

Chemotherapy treatment such as Docetaxal (Taxotere) or Cabazitaxel (Jevtana) for advanced prostate cancer could increase your risk of severe COVID-19. Prostate cancer chemotherapy affects both cancerous and normal cells and as a result your bone marrow makes fewer infection-fighting cells, leaving you at higher risk for all types of infection.

You should talk to your doctor about how to manage your risks and minimise your exposure to infection. If your white blood cells are being monitored, it is vitally important to talk to your doctor or treatment team before visiting a cancer clinic or hospital. It's critical to minimise your exposure as much as possible by keeping a safe social distance from others at all times, following the advice of authorities, and maintaining good hygiene.

Should I stop my prostate cancer treatment?

We recommend following the expert medical advice of your doctor and specialists.

Always follow the advice of your doctor and treatment team, and seek a second opinion if you have doubts. While your treatment schedule may change slightly due to health system demand, it is vitally important to follow expert medical advice.

I am being treated for prostate cancer and have another condition, am I at a higher risk of COVID-19?

Other medical conditions can increase your risk of severe COVID-19, regardless of prostate cancer diagnosis. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. Respiratory conditions such as asthma, emphysema, or former heavy smoking and other conditions that affect your immune system such as inflammatory bowel disease or a history of transplant may also increase your risk.

What else can I do to lower my risks of COVID-19?

If you are a smoker, quit immediately. Maintain a healthy, well-balanced diet, avoid or minimise alcohol consumption, keep a healthy weight, and ensure you get enough sleep and daily physical activity.

If you need support, we're here to help!

There is still much we don't know about COVID-19 and the impact it will have on our community. It is clear, however, that men living with prostate cancer and their families will be especially vulnerable to the effects of this pandemic. Please donate today to keep our work alive and call us on 1800 22 00 99 for help or email enquiries@pcfa.org.au.