



COVID-19 & Prostate Cancer: Your risks explained

An information sheet for consumers and the community

What are coronavirus and COVID-19?

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.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms 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?

Practice good hand and respiratory hygiene including washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs, avoid touching your face, and minimise exposure to others.

Do men with prostate cancer faced increased risks linked to COVID-19?

Evidence suggests men are at greater risk than women of contracting severe cases of COVID-19. One possible explanation for this is that the female hormones, oestrogens, have protective functions that contribute to a stronger immune response, resulting in faster clearance of the virus. Male hormones, combined with immunosuppressive effects of prostate cancer treatment and any other underlying health conditions, can contribute to the severity of disease, with some studies suggesting men on Androgen Deprivation Therapy may experience protective effects from their hormone therapy.

Initial evidence has also found that for men with prostate cancer, COVID-19 can cause inflammation that has the potential to accelerate prostate cancer progression.

Incidence and mortality rates: Cancer cases with COVID-19

| Cancer Type | Incidence (%) | Mortality (%) |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Lung cancer | 20.95 | 55 |
| Breast cancer | 10.48 | 14 |
| Hematological (leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma) | 8.57 | 37 |
| Prostate cancer | 16.76 | 20 |
| Urothelial cancer | 5.38 | 38 |
| Colorectal cancer | 4.79 | 38 |

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s42003-020-1088-9/tables/3>

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