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Dr Dias' special interests include:

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11/2025

Understanding Prostate Cancer

by Dr Brendan Dias, Urologist

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Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers in Australian men and the second leading cause of cancer-related death. The good news? If it's found early, prostate cancer is highly treatable.

In 2025, it's estimated that 29,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and about 4,000 will die from it. Early detection is critical, so knowing the signs and talking to your doctor about testing can make a big difference.

What Are the Symptoms?

Prostate cancer often develops slowly and may not cause symptoms early on. When symptoms do appear, they can include:

- Blood in urine or semen
- Changes in urinary flow
- Pain when urinating or ejaculating
- Needing to urinate more often
- Back or pelvic pain
- Feeling like your bladder isn't empty

Who Is at Risk?

Your risk increases if you:

- Are over 50
- Have a family history of prostate, breast, or ovarian cancer
- Have a father or brother diagnosed before age 60

PSA Testing | What You Need to Know

The Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test is a simple blood test that measures PSA levels. Higher levels can indicate something is happening with the prostate, but it doesn't diagnose cancer on its own.

Your doctor will consider:

- Your age
- Symptoms
- Family history
- Overall health

Before testing, you should discuss the benefits and possible harms with your doctor.

Australian Guidelines

- Average risk: Men aged 50–69 who choose testing should have a PSA test every 2 years.
- Higher risk (family history): Testing may start earlier, from age 40 or 45.
- Over 70: Testing is generally not recommended because the harms may outweigh the benefits.





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Benefits vs Harms

Benefits:

- Early detection
- Better treatment outcomes
- Lower risk of death

Possible Harms:

- False positives or negatives
- Detecting cancers that may never cause harm

What Happens If PSA Is High?

If your PSA level is higher than expected, your doctor may refer you to a urologist for further tests, such as:

- Digital Rectal Examination (DRE)
- Imaging (MRI, CT, PET scans)
- Prostate biopsy – the only way to confirm cancer

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on whether the cancer is:

- Localised (only in the prostate)
- Advanced (spread beyond the prostate)

Options include:

- Active surveillance
- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Hormone therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Immunotherapy
- Targeted therapy

Surgery

A radical prostatectomy is an operation to remove the prostate gland and, when needed, nearby lymph nodes. Today, this surgery is almost always done using robot-assisted keyhole surgery. This modern approach means:

- Smaller cuts
- Less pain
- Faster recovery

Robot-assisted technology gives surgeons a clearer view and more precision. In suitable cases, these advanced techniques can preserve urinary control and sexual function, improving quality of life after surgery.

The Bottom Line

Modern prostate cancer care isn't just about removing cancer - it's about preserving what matters most: control, confidence, and quality of life. If you're concerned about your risk or symptoms, talk to your GP about PSA testing and what's right for you.

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