

Be physically active

In a 2005 study, men aged 65 and older who engaged in vigorous physical activity (such as running, bicycling, or swimming) for three hours a week were about 70 percent less likely to be diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer or to die from the disease, in comparison to men who got little vigorous exercise. Physical activity may be protective by lowering levels of insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), a compound linked with an increased risk of prostate cancer. Regular exercise has also been shown to reduce fatigue, anxiety, and depression in cancer patients, and it's important for weight control.

Maintain a healthy weight

Some research suggests that obesity increases the risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer. A 2007 study of more than 285,000 men found that while obese men had the lowest overall incidence of prostate cancer, they were 46 percent more likely to die from the disease compared to men of normal weight. Men who were overweight but not obese didn't fare much better: They were 25 percent more likely to die from prostate cancer compared to thinner men.

Practice relaxation

Cancer treatment can be stressful, and chronic stress seems to weaken immune function. Simply taking a few slow, deep breaths can be very calming during times of stress. Also, regular practice of meditation or yoga has been shown to improve mood, sleep, and quality of life in cancer patients. Mindfulness meditation--which involves moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness of thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations--appears beneficial for people with cancer and many other medical conditions. To find a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program near you, visit umassmed.edu/cfm/mbsr.

Strengthen your support network

Family and friends can provide practical help such as taking you to medical appointments and running other errands, and strong social connections can be a powerful buffer against stress. In addition, joining a support group (either in person or online) can give you a sense of solidarity with others who are dealing with prostate cancer. To locate prostate cancer support groups, contact the American Cancer Society (cancer.org) or US TOO International (ustoo.org). Both organizations also offer education and support for spouses and other partners of men with prostate cancer.

Use supplements wisely

Some research suggests that taking high doses of antioxidants during the course of radiation therapy may raise the risk of cancer recurrence, although other studies have found no harmful effects. Until scientists know more, it's prudent for people undergoing radiation to skip supplements except for a multivitamin/multimineral product that contains 100 percent of the Daily Value for various nutrients. As for people undergoing chemotherapy, avoid the antidepressant herb St. John's wort, which interacts with many anticancer drugs; use other supplements (particularly antioxidants) with some caution until more is known about their potential benefit or harm. When in doubt, check with your oncologist.

Explore acupuncture

Preliminary studies suggest that this ancient needling technique can reduce hot flashes in prostate cancer patients

undergoing hormone therapy. Acupuncture has also shown promise for managing pain, improving sleep, raising low energy levels, reducing anxiety and depression, and controlling chemotherapy-induced nausea. You can find licensed acupuncturists by contacting the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (nccaom.org) or the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (medicalacupuncture.org).

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