

Prostate cancer awareness

Our sector has a high male contingency and therefore the prevalence of prostate cancer and prostate disease within that group will be significant. The JIB prides itself in tackling the causes of potential accidents and incidents of ill health at work with very positive results. However whether the risks to safety and health are attributed to workplace causes or not, the industry and the people that work in it will be adversely affected, in terms of human suffering and cost to both employers and workforce.

The Prostate gland - function, location and description

The prostate gland is shaped like a doughnut, weighs about an ounce and is the size of a chestnut. It is just below the bladder and wraps around the tube which carries urine from the bladder. It helps to control your flow and produces fluids that make up semen, without it the human race would not exist.

Prostate cancer - the facts

Prostate cancer is the most common male cancer in the UK, with over 27,000 men diagnosed each year and 10,000 deaths. Despite these statistics thousands of men over 45 do not know enough about it and are not going to their doctors and clinics for regular examination which can save and extend lives. It is important that men seek regular checkups as not everyone experiences symptoms of prostate cancer. On many occasions the signs of prostate cancer are first detected by a doctor during a routine check-up, but symptoms can be common so it's vital to know what to look out for.

Symptoms

The following can be symptoms of prostate cancer:

- A need to urinate frequently, especially at night
- Difficulty starting urination or holding back urine
- Weak or interrupted flow of urine
- Painful or burning urination
- Difficulty in having an erection
- Painful ejaculation
- Blood in urine or semen
- Frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or upper thighs

IMPORTANT You should consult with your doctor if you experience any of the symptoms above. It's important to remember that these symptoms can indicate the presence of prostate cancer or other less serious diseases or disorders, such as prostatitis, an infection in the prostate gland usually caused by a bug or Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) where the gland enlarges can occur later in life for no reason. Both are very painful but treatable but it's important to get treatment as early as possible to avoid complications.

Alarming Facts for Men

2.5 million men have symptoms due to prostate problems

1 in 3 men will have prostate problems during their life

1 in 12 men develop prostate cancer

10,000 men die annually

In UK just 49% of men survive more than 5 years (almost the poorest in Europe)

These figures have an obvious impact on workers under the JIB umbrella - the sad thing is the disease can be cured in its early stages, or kept in check for many years. In its latter stages the cancer spreads to the bones and is painful and can be terminal. It's a matter of knowing what to look for and getting it checked out.

The 3 main types of prostate problem in a nutshell

- BPH: Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia, enlargement of the gland in older men.
- Prostatitis: inflammation of the gland, can affect men at any age and is painful
- Prostate cancer: the most serious, with risk increasing over 50

Tests for prostate cancer are available:

- **PSA, Prostate Specific Antigen**, protein that the prostate produces levels can go up with prostate problems.
- **DRE, Digital Rectal Examination**, a bit uncomfortable and embarrassing, but not painful.

Such tests are available to JIB employees covered by BUPA 'lifestyle' health checks, for example.

If either of these tests proves positive then your GP will refer you to a specialist, where further tests such as an MRI scan are undertaken to confirm whether or not you have a prostate disorder including cancer. The problem is that men are not coming in for examination and often leave it too late.

If you have any of the symptoms described go to your GP soon as you can. If you are over 45 you should start going for regular examinations. This may save your life and avoid suffering for you and your family.

The **Prostate Cancer Charity** offers support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. The site has information on the prostate, prostate cancer etc.

www.prostate-cancer.org.uk

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