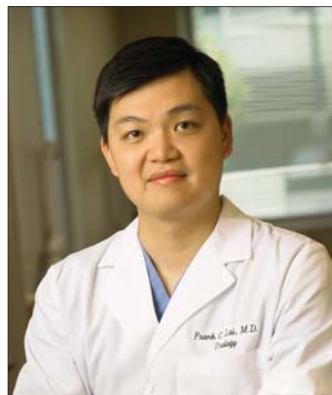


Keep an eye on your Prostate

By Dr. Frank C. Lai, El Camino Hospital



As we get older, the prostate naturally enlarges so it is important to actively manage your health in order to live a long and healthy life.

The prostate is a male reproductive organ, which sits on top of the rectum and produces and liquefies semen. Because it does enlarge slowly over time, it is very important to monitor that progress in your annual physical examinations.

The best advice for long-term prostate health is to eat a healthy diet and to exercise regularly.

Foods that are high in lycopene and quercetin are particularly important because of their anti-inflammatory and potentially cancer battling effects like tomatoes, watermelon, citrus fruits, green tea, broccoli and other green leafy vegetables.

If you have a family history of prostate cancer and/or you are of African American heritage, you should have annual check-ups that include a PSA test. If there is no prostate cancer in your family, we recommend annual exams and screenings starting at age 50.

PSA Screening

The prostate produces a protein called PSA and small amounts are released into the bloodstream. The PSA test measures the amount of protein produced by the prostate. When there's a problem with the prostate, such as growing prostate cancer, more and more PSA is released until it reaches a level where it can be easily detected in the blood.

As we age, it is important for all of us to establish a base line PSA test result, so that we can know immediately if there is a potential problem on the horizon. Looking at your PSA trend over the years allows us to accurately assess your health long before any real problems occur. In general, normal PSA test results are as follows:

- Age 40: less than 2.5
- Age 50: less than 3.5
- Age 60: less than 4.5
- Age 70: less than 6.5

Remember that there are always variations and with annual screenings, the baseline test tells us what is "normal" for you.

Signs and Symptoms of a Serious Problem

An enlarged prostate can cause urinary obstruction--the first sign of which is waking up at night with frequent urination. This symptom is not necessarily anything to be concerned about but it might be a good idea to let your physician know if it becomes problematic.

SYMPTOMS & CONDITIONS

Any of the following five symptoms or conditions requires immediate treatment:

1. Blood in the urine
2. Urine retention (difficulty urinating)
3. Bladder stone
4. Kidney dysfunction due to a urinary problem
5. Infection

HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. <http://www.prostatecancerfoundation.org/>
2. <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/urology>
3. <http://www.zerocancer.org/index.html>
4. <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate/publications/decisionguide/>
5. <http://www.webmd.com/prostate-cancer/guide/national-cancer-institute>

A Curable Cancer

One in seven men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer but the mortality rate is very, very low—only about 5-6%. It's important to understand two very important facts. First, prostate cancer is very curable and second; your quality of life CAN be maintained. Most men now make a full recovery.

The majority of prostate cancers can be categorized as adenocarcinoma which can be detected by an elevated PSA or an abnormal examination. Treatment options are based on staging results and your Gleason score which is a score based on the biopsy results.

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There is not one best way to treat prostate cancer. Each person's physiology and make-up is unique so it is critical to discuss all the various options with your physician for the treatment option that is right for you.

In some cases, treatment may be active surveillance and in others, may include surgery and/or radiation therapy. But the bottom line is that today, we have excellent, leading-edge treatment, which will allow you to lead a long and healthy life.

Minimally Invasive Surgery

If you elect to have surgery at El Camino Hospital, we use the da Vinci Robot, which is the most accurate, minimally invasive surgery. It's quickly becoming the preferred surgical treatment for prostate cancer. In fact, studies suggest that the da Vinci robotic surgery may be the most effective, least invasive prostate surgery performed today.

With finer instrumentation, better optics and a higher range of instrumentation motion, the likelihood of a complete recovery without long-term side effects is for most patients better than it has ever been.

Dr. Frank C. Lai is a board certified urologist at El Camino Hospital. He can be reached at 650-962-4662. For more information, visit www.elcaminourology.com.

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