

Cryotherapy

This fact sheet is for men who are thinking about having cryotherapy to treat their prostate cancer. It is one of several fact sheets that have been written to help you decide which treatment best suits you. This fact sheet describes how cryotherapy treats prostate cancer and what the side effects can be. Each specialist team will do things slightly differently so use this fact sheet as a general guide, and ask your specialist team for more details about the treatment you will have. You may also wish to call our confidential Helpline on 0800 074 8383 for more information about cryotherapy and other treatments for prostate cancer.

In this fact sheet:

- What is cryotherapy?
- Who can have cryotherapy?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- What does cryotherapy involve?
- What are the side effects?
- Where can I get support?
- More information
- Questions to ask your specialist team

What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy is a way of treating prostate cancer that uses freezing and thawing to kill the cancer cells in the prostate gland. It is also sometimes known as cryosurgery and cryoablation. It is done using a number of thin needles (cryoneedles) which are inserted into the prostate gland under anaesthetic. This process kills both normal cells and cancer cells within the gland.

The treatment involves getting the right balance between freezing the whole prostate gland, to kill all the cancer cells, and protecting healthy parts of the gland and surrounding tissues to avoid damaging them.

There have been improvements in cryotherapy in recent years, which have reduced the risk of side effects and improved the success of the treatment. However, we need more research to show whether

cryotherapy improves quality of life or is as effective in the long term compared to other treatments. For more information on the side effects of cryotherapy see page 3.

Who can have cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy can be used to treat prostate cancer that has not spread outside the prostate gland (localised prostate cancer). It is also sometimes used to treat cancer that is breaking through the capsule of the prostate. It is not suitable for cancer that has spread to other parts of the body (advanced prostate cancer).

It is most commonly an option for men whose prostate cancer has come back after treatment with radiotherapy or brachytherapy. It is less commonly offered as a first treatment for prostate cancer. However, it may be an option for men who are unable to have surgery to treat prostate cancer, for example because they have heart problems (cardiovascular problems) which can make surgery more risky.

Men with severe urinary symptoms may not be suitable for cryotherapy as it may make these problems worse. If you have difficulty passing urine or have to pass urine frequently you may wish to discuss this with your specialist team.

team if your urine is strong smelling or you have a temperature, which could be signs of an infection. If you develop a fistula, you will need to have an operation to repair the hole.

Pain

It is normal to experience some pain after having cryotherapy and your specialist team should tell you which painkillers you can take.

However, some men will have pain that lasts for a few weeks or months. The pain may be in the area between the testicles and back passage (perineal pain), and in the back passage (rectal pain). There is a greater risk of pain if you have had another treatment before cryotherapy. The pain will usually improve, and is often treated with antibiotics. Speak to your specialist team if you have any pain.

Where can I get support?

As well as getting medical help to treat your cancer most men find it helps to get some emotional support as well. Feeling more in control of your emotions can help make you feel better. Talking to a partner, friend or relative about how you are feeling may help them to support you and help you cope better. Sharing concerns can make any decisions about your treatment easier to deal with.

You may also find it helps to talk to your doctor or a specialist cancer nurse at your treatment centre. If you would like to talk to a Prostate Cancer Charity specialist nurse about your treatment or anything you have read in this fact sheet, call our confidential Helpline on 0800 074 8383.

If you would like to speak to another man who has had cryotherapy, The Prostate Cancer Charity can put you in touch with someone through our peer support service. Call our confidential Helpline on 0800 074 8383 to find out more about this service. There are also prostate cancer support groups throughout the country, which provide the opportunity to meet others affected by prostate cancer and share experiences. You can find details of your nearest group on our website: www.prostate-cancer.org.uk.

More information

The Prostate Cancer Charity

This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. Call our Helpline on **0800 074 8383** or visit our website at www.prostate-cancer.org.uk for more Tool Kit fact sheets, including an **A to Z of medical words** which explains some of the words and phrases used in this sheet.

CancerHelp UK

www.cancerhelp.org.uk

CancerHelp UK is the patient information website of Cancer Research UK. It contains information on cryotherapy and living with cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk

89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ

Freephone Helpline: 0808 808 00 00

Mon-Fri 9am-8pm

Information on coping with cancer and treatment and financial support for people with cancer, family and friends.

National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence (NICE)

www.nice.org.uk

Order line: 0845 003 7783

Email: publications@nice.org.uk

NICE produce two booklets on cryotherapy.

To order a copy, quote ref. IPG145 for information on cryotherapy as a first treatment and quote ref. IPG119 for information on cryotherapy for recurrent prostate cancer.

UK Prostate Link

www.prostate-link.org.uk

UK Prostate Link helps you find and compare reliable information about all aspects of prostate cancer, including cryotherapy.

Healthtalkonline.org

www.healthtalkonline.org

Watch, listen to or read personal experiences of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Includes interviews with men who have had cryotherapy to treat prostate cancer.

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to make sure that its services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope that these will add to the medical advice you have had and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please contact your doctor if you are worried about any medical issues.

The Prostate Cancer Charity funds research into the causes of, and treatments for, prostate cancer. We also provide support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. We rely on charitable donations to continue this work. If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 8222 7666.

The Prostate Cancer Charity
First Floor, Cambridge House,
100 Cambridge Grove, London W6 0LE
Email: info@prostate-cancer.org.uk
Telephone: 020 8222 7622

The Prostate Cancer Charity Scotland
Unit F22-24 Festival Business Centre,
150 Brand Street, Glasgow G51 1DH
Email: scotland@prostate-cancer.org.uk
Telephone: 0141 314 0050

Website: www.prostate-cancer.org.uk



Free and confidential Helpline
0800 074 8383*
Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm, Wed 7pm - 9pm

Email: helpline@prostate-cancer.org.uk

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References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available on our website.

Reviewed by:

- Hashim Ahmed, MRC Clinical Research Fellow (Uro-Oncology), Division of Surgery and Interventional Science, University College London
- Mr Frank Chinegwundoh, Consultant Urological Surgeon, Newham University Hospital NHS Trust and Barts and The London NHS Trust
- Professor Damian Greene, Consultant Urologist, City Hospital, Sunderland
- Phil Reynolds, Advanced Practice Radiographer (Urology), Guys and St Thomas' Hospital, London
- The Prostate Cancer Charity Support & Information Specialist Nurses
- The Prostate Cancer Charity Information Volunteers

Written and edited by:

The Prostate Cancer Charity Information Team