

Prostate Cancer in West Virginia

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland that is part of the male reproductive system. It is located just below the bladder, in front of the rectum, and surrounds the urethra, or the tube that empties urine from the bladder. Men can experience changes in their prostate as they age that are not cancer related. One condition, called prostatic hyperplasia, arises when the prostate enlarges, narrowing and decreasing the flow of urine from the bladder. Prostate cancer occurs when cells in the prostate gland begin to grow out of control.¹ Most prostate cancers grow slowly and may not cause any health problems throughout the remainder of a man's life.² However, some prostate cancers are more aggressive and require early treatment. Prostate cancer screening can detect these tumors when they are still small and easily treatable.²

The primary screening test for prostate cancer is the Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. PSA is a protein made by cells (both normal and cancerous) in the prostate gland. The chance of having prostate cancer increases as PSA levels increase: most men without prostate cancer have PSA levels under four nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL), while those that have a PSA over 10 ng/mL have a greater chance (over 50%) of having prostate cancer.³ An abnormal result may be followed by a second PSA test some time later, and/or a prostate biopsy.

There are some caveats to consider prior to prostate cancer screening. This test can find high-risk prostate cancers (i.e. those that spread quickly) before they become difficult to treat. However, there is a chance of receiving a false positive test result, meaning a man may have an abnormal PSA test result without having prostate cancer. False positive tests can lead to unnecessary testing, like prostate biopsies, and may cause unnecessary worry and stress for the patient in question.⁴ Due to this, men between the ages of 55 and 69 should make their own decision about prostate cancer screening and discuss with their primary care provider if prostate cancer screening is right for them. Risk factors that should be considered and discussed include having a family history of prostate cancer, being African American, and other medical conditions that could make prostate cancer treatment difficult or impossible.⁵

About one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime.⁶ Prostate cancer is rare in men under 40, but risk increases greatly after age 50⁷ with an average age at diagnosis being 66 years old.⁶ Between 2015-2019, West Virginia reported 6,464 prostate cases, and 920 prostate deaths.⁸ 78% of all prostate cancers reported during this time were diagnosed as Localized, showing the importance of prostate cancer screening.⁸

1) American Cancer Society. Accessed at <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer.html> on 2/2/2022 at 2:21 PM

2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate/prostate-cancer-health-tip-sheet.htm> on 2/2/22 at 2:02 PM

3) American Cancer Society. Accessed at <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/tests.html> on 2/1/22 at 12:20 PM

4) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate/basic_info/benefits-harms.htm on 2/2/22 at 3:00 PM

5) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate/basic_info/get-screened.htm on 2/2/22 at 2:45 PM

6) American Cancer Society. Accessed at <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics.html#:~:text=About%201%20man%20in%208,at%20diagnosis%20is%20about%2066> on 2/1/22 at 1:15 PM

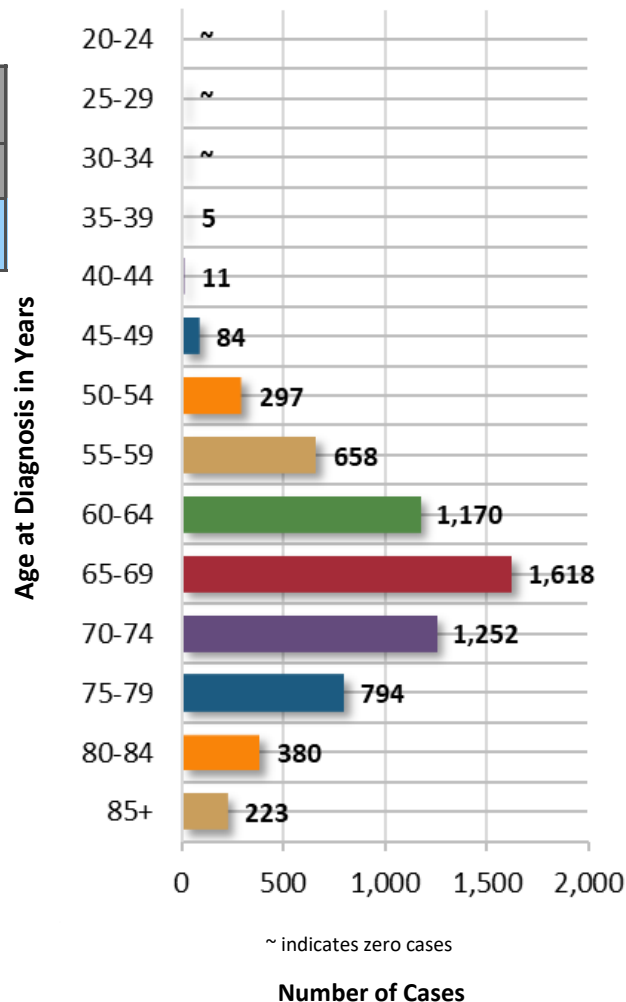
7) American Cancer Society. Accessed at <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html> on 2/2/22 at 2:31 PM

8) WV Cancer Registry

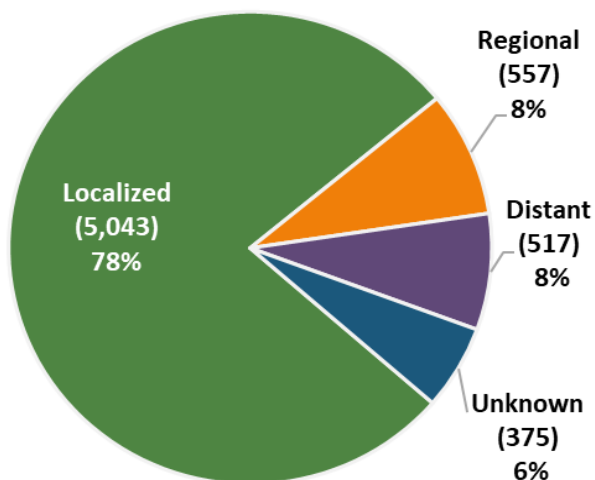
Prostate Cancer Incidence and Mortality Rate (per 100,000) and Counts, West Virginia, 2015-2019

	Incidence		Mortality	
	Rate	Cases	Rate	Deaths
Males	98.3	6,464	16.8	920

Prostate Cancer Case Counts by Age Group, West Virginia, 2015-2019



Percentage of Prostate Cancer Cases by Stage at Diagnosis, West Virginia, 2015-2019



Average Annual Age-Adjusted Prostate Cancer Incidence Rates by County West Virginia, 2015-2019

