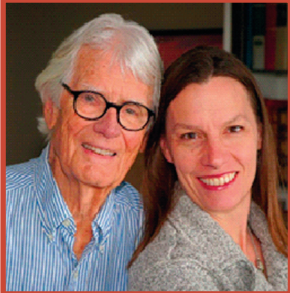




HEALTH CORNER



How to Live to 101 With a Healthy Prostate

By W. Gifford-Jones MD and Diana Gifford

Centenarians get asked, "What's your secret?" The honest answer is "good genes and good luck." But for men who have reached old, old age, a fair addition might be "plus a functioning prostate." This tiny gland, often the size of a walnut, can have an outsized impact on a man's health and happiness. So, if you plan to blow out 101 candles, your prostate deserves your life-long care.

A lot of people have no idea what the prostate does. It sits just below the bladder and surrounds the urethra, helping produce seminal fluid. But as men age, it can become the source of trouble – benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), prostatitis, and prostate cancer top the list. Statistically, by age 60, over half of men will have some degree of BPH. By age 85, that number jumps to 90%. And prostate cancer? It's the second most common cancer in North American men, right after skin cancer.

So how can a man tilt the odds in his favour?

It turns out what you put on your plate matters – immensely. Research from the University of Toronto shows that men who consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats have a lower risk of prostate problems. Lycopene, the antioxidant found in cooked tomatoes, is particularly prostate-friendly. In Italy, where pasta sauce is practically a food group, prostate cancer rates are significantly lower than in North America. Coincidence? Perhaps not.

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish like salmon also have benefits. A Harvard study of over 293,000 men found those with the highest omega-3 intake had a significantly lower risk of fatal prostate cancer.

Meanwhile, a diet high in red meat and dairy has been associated with increased risk. That doesn't mean you have to swear off steak forever, but moderation is a virtue.

Exercise isn't just good for your heart – your prostate loves it, too. A meta-analysis in the Journal of Urology found that men who engaged in regular physical activity had a 10–20% lower risk of prostate cancer. Even brisk walking for 30 minutes a day can help reduce urinary symptoms from BPH.

And let's not forget body weight. Obesity is a known risk factor for aggressive prostate cancer. Carrying too much abdominal fat raises estrogen levels and lowers testosterone, which can fuel prostate issues.

PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) testing remains controversial. Overdiagnosis can lead to unnecessary treatments and side effects. But as Dr. Willet Whitmore, a pioneer in urologic oncology, once said, "Is this cancer going to kill the patient, or is the patient going to die with the cancer?"

The answer requires nuance. In Canada, the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care recommends against routine PSA screening for men under 55 or over 70 unless there are symptoms or strong risk factors. The American Urological Association suggests a more individualized approach.

Family history counts. If your father or brother had prostate cancer, your risk doubles. And if you're of African descent, your risk is even higher. For these men, earlier and more frequent screening makes sense.

What about supplements? Some are worth considering. Saw palmetto has mixed evidence, but many men find it helps with urinary symptoms. Zinc, selenium, and vitamin D have shown promise in small studies. Just remember, more is not always better.

If you want to live to 101 with a healthy prostate, eat like a Mediterranean, move like a Scandinavian, and get checked like a Canadian – with caution, but not complacency.

As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young."

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