

Caring for  
**Someone  
With  
Prostate Cancer**



# Who is this information for?

**This information** is for partners and people who are caring for someone who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. A carer can be a relative, friend or neighbour. It doesn't matter what your age, gender, sexuality, profession or cultural background is – anyone can become a carer.

If you are caring for someone who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, you may find yourself dealing with feelings of fear, anger, depression and loss.

You may be coming to terms with the diagnosis and wondering how you will care for yourself as well as your loved one during the prostate cancer journey. Many describe it as feeling as though they are on an emotional roller coaster. Life may change quickly: prostate cancer can impact your lifestyle, relationships, work and finances. You may also find yourself taking on new roles and responsibilities. This brochure will help you as you provide practical and emotional support for the coming weeks, months or years.

## SOME COMMON REACTIONS

Everyone is different, but the following are some common feelings to many carers:

### Fear

- Of how unwell the person you're caring for is feeling

- Of not knowing enough about the treatment by health professionals
- Being responsible for giving medications and assisting in other ways medically
- Feeling like everything is out of your control
- Not knowing what the future holds
- The possibility that the person you're caring for could die.

### Anger and frustration

- Having to be the carer
- The extra responsibilities and demands placed on you
- Family and friends not helping as much as you would hope
- Changes to your plans for the future
- Not having as much time for the things you used to enjoy
- Feeling that the person you're caring for doesn't appreciate you enough
- A loss of intimacy.

# Life may change quickly: prostate cancer can impact your lifestyle, relationships, work and finances.



## Loneliness

It is easy to feel isolated and alone while you're caring for someone with prostate cancer. The disease can limit time socialising with family and friends and also the time you spend with the person who has prostate cancer.

## Stress

The many new demands in your role as carer can be stressful. This can result in physical symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, headaches, fatigue, feeling unwell and overly sensitive.

## YOUR ROLE IN TREATMENT CHOICES AND DECISIONS

Often, partners and people caring for men diagnosed with prostate cancer feel excluded from discussions about the person they are caring for. It is important that you feel involved in the decision making process, especially when it comes to treatment decisions. This is particularly important when some treatments for prostate cancer may result in short-term or long-term continence, bowel and sexual issues.



# Carers must think of themselves first, because if they have to give up, there will be no carer.

Limited consultation time with health professionals can be managed by being prepared. Before the appointment, you and the person you are caring for should think about and note down the questions you want to ask and the points you want clarified.

As a partner or carer, try to make sure that you become:

- Informed about prostate cancer
- Familiar with the treatment options and side effects
- Mindful of when a second opinion might be of value
- Aware of your own limitations.

This will help you participate in decision making and the support you need for yourself and others.

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Caring for someone with prostate cancer brings with it lots of new demands on you. Looking after your physical and emotional health is important to keep you going.

Some things you can do to take better care of yourself might include:

- **Getting out and about:** Try to continue to do activities you enjoy.
- **Knowing you're not alone:** Talking to people who understand what you're going through, like friends, family and support groups.
- **Keep healthy:** Make time for regular exercise, have regular healthy meals and get plenty of rest.
- **Take a break:** Ask family, friends and service providers to help you have regular breaks.
- **Practice relaxation:** Take time to yourself everyday to simply sit and relax or listen to some music.
- **Linking up with your local prostate cancer support group:** You'll meet others in your situation who can help you at this time. Go along, even if your partner shows no interest. In time, when he sees the benefits you are receiving, he may even join you.

# When someone has Prostate Cancer it affects their family and friends as well.

## LOSS AND GRIEF

Grief is a common reaction to losses and changes associated with a prostate cancer diagnosis, such as loss of employment or changes in relationships with friends, family and the person you are caring for.

## ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

It is common to feel 'down' at times after a diagnosis of prostate cancer. Feeling down usually lasts a short period of time without affecting your life too much.

Depression is more severe than this. It may last a long time and can significantly affect your life. Some of the symptoms of depression include feeling empty, losing interest in things, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, feeling tired all the time and feeling like life is not worth living.

There are many ways to deal with your reactions to a prostate cancer diagnosis. Talk to your doctor and remember, your mental health is as important as your physical wellbeing and that of your partner.



## PATIENT WELFARE GRANTS

Our Welfare Grants Fund is available to assist patients and families who are experiencing some hardship related to their treatment for prostate cancer. The grants are provided to assist with expenses relating to transport and accommodation, counselling and specialised services or equipment needed and are limited to \$500.

The grants are not available for medical, pharmaceutical or treatment costs.

Applications forms are available from the National Office.

# Where can I go for help?

- Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand: [www.prostate.org.nz](http://www.prostate.org.nz) or 0800 477 678
- Prostate Cancer Support Groups: locate your nearest group at [www.prostate.org.nz/support-groups](http://www.prostate.org.nz/support-groups)
- Depression Helpline: [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz) or 0800 111 757
- Cancer Information Helpline: [www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz) or 0800 CANCER
- Your Healthcare Team: speak to your relevant healthcare professional
- A bilingual health worker who speaks your language
- Carers NZ: [www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz) or 0800 777 797
- Respite Care: access to respite care in your local area call 0800 284 663 or [www.access.org.nz](http://www.access.org.nz)
- NZ Continence Association Helpline: 0800 330 066 [www.continence.org.nz](http://www.continence.org.nz)
- Department of Veterans Affairs: [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz) or 0800 4VETERAN

## SUPPORT

PCFNZ has affiliated support groups throughout New Zealand for men and their families affected by prostate cancer.

## TO VOLUNTEER

PCFNZ has a number of opportunities for people to assist with our work through support, fundraising and community education activities.

## MAKE A DONATION

All donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible and enable PCFNZ to develop services for men and their families with prostate cancer.

## CONTACT US

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