

Mayo Clinic Q & A- Dr. Matthew Tollefson - Prostate Cancer S...

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Halena Gazelka, Dr. Matthew Tollefson, Narrator

N Narrator 00:00
Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A,

D Dr. Matthew Tollefson 00:03
The cure rates are so high, the majority of men having treatment of prostate cancer will not have a recurrence in their lifetime.

N Narrator 00:10
The second most common type of cancer in men, prostate cancers usually grow slowly and are confined to the prostate gland. When detected early, there's a strong chance for successful treatment.

D Dr. Matthew Tollefson 00:20
And we've been successful at treating prostate cancer, and that means most men with prostate cancer do not die of prostate cancer. It also means that many may live for decades in survivorship of prostate cancers. The concept of survivorship is really critical in the prostate cancer area.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 00:39
Welcome, everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm Dr. Halena Gazelka. Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer among men. But thanks to improvements in detection and treatment, the likelihood of surviving the diagnosis is good. Living after a cancer diagnosis is often called survivorship. The survivorship experience is different for every cancer survivor, but it's possible to predict some of what the

survivor might experience based on the type of cancer. Here to discuss what men can expect after treatment for prostate cancer is Mayo Clinic urologist, Dr. Matthew Tollefson. Thanks for being here today, Matt.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 01:19

Oh, absolutely. Thanks for asking me, I really appreciate the chance to speak.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:24

Well, I think this is a great topic because prostate cancer is common, correct?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 01:29

Oh, absolutely. It's a very common disease. So, approximately one in six American men are diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point in their lives. But even more men are screened for prostate cancer with PSA and are concerned about prostate cancer. So, this is a very common tumor that affects many men.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:49

When we talk about survivorship Matt, what are men most worried about after undergoing treatment for prostate cancer?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 01:56

So, I think survivorship is just a critical issue in prostate cancer management. I mean, it's really front and center for all of our discussions about prostate cancer treatment and management. And that's really for a few reasons. You know, the location of the prostate certainly makes it more of a factor when treating it locally. So, many men are concerned about urinary function, and sexual function, and to some extent bowel function, because these are all in the general region of the prostate. But also due to the protracted history, I mean, we've been successful at treating prostate cancer, and that means most men with prostate cancer do not die of prostate cancer. It also means that, you know, many may live for decades in survivorship of prostate cancer. So, the concept of survivorship is really critical in the prostate cancer area.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 02:51

When you talk about some of the worries that men might have such as urinary incontinence, or sexual dysfunction, etc., what are some effective coping strategies that can be employed to help them?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 03:02

So, I think it's critical to recognize that the initial treatment is important. So, you know, and some of these can differ a little bit based on that initial treatment. But effective coping strategies, one are recognizing that, that a new cancer diagnosis impacts men in ways beyond just simply urinary incontinence and

erectile dysfunction. So, I think having good support networks around men is clearly important after a diagnosis like this. Recognizing that it in many ways, takes a village, and encouraging men to reach out to their support network support for help. In regards to like, the specific issues of urinary control and sexual function, the other thing I would just really emphasize is that we have effective treatments and ways to manage these things for men so that if they do have side-effects of treatment, or they do have disease progression, which were to cause, you know, some of these adverse effects, that we do have effective ways to manage them. So, making sure that you bring them up as you're meeting with your physician so that the physician is aware, and the physician can perhaps intervene at a time when the treatment is likely to be most effective. So, I think just general understanding in that way is really critical.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:22

And what kind of questions should men and their partners be prepared to ask the physician?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 04:29

So, you know, specifically in dealing with prostate cancer, I think understanding one's unique circumstance. So again, it's absolutely critical to have that discussion with your doctor. So, you know, asking in your situation, for example, is it, you know, is the location of my tumor, my specific tumor, is that likely to impair my urinary control or sexual function? And then I think, you know, really once we drill down those details, and every person's a little different there. Understanding the treatment if you're going to be having treatment for prostate cancer, understanding which treatment you're having, and what the likely effects of those treatments are. I think having a general understanding of the experience and expertise of the person that's going to be involved in your care has also been shown to really impact some of these side-effect rates and complication rates. So, again super important and critical aspect of prostate cancer survivorship.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 05:26

I imagine that besides long-term effects, there are short-term effects from some of the treatments for prostate cancer that could be concerning as well. And what are those, Matt?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 05:37

So, I think, you know, this also can run the spectrum. So, commonly used together with some of our other treatments, specifically like radiation treatments, and some focal therapy can include hormonal treatments. So, dropping men's testosterone levels down has been shown to improve the efficacy of some of our treatments, but in the short-term that can have real effects. So, you know, certainly a decrease in one's libido, hot flashes, some decreased energy, sometimes some weight gain can be side-effects of the systemic hormonal therapies that we use. So, it's important for men to recognize that these are not necessarily permanent effects. And that many of these effects fade in time as we can wean off some of the extra hormonal treatments. The other, you know, real local side-effects can come down to, you know, radiation and surgery when used to treat prostate cancer. Clearly surgery has high risks of, you know, some leakage of urine especially when straining, coughing, and doing those more stressful activities. So, that's an important one for men to be aware of, because that is also one that can improve in time. So, you know, having men engage with physical therapy, having them do Kegel exercises is really important to

help mitigate that risk. And then the last really prostate cancer specific risk is that of erectile dysfunction. So, at times with surgery or radiation treatments directly to the prostate that can impair one's ability to get an erection. And again, this is really an area where I would just emphasize that we have really effective treatments, the Viagras of the world, you know, those drugs are effective. It does, it's important to use them, it's important to inform your doctor that this is a concern for you such that these other drugs and treatments can be employed as effectively as possible.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 07:30

I think that's a really important point, Matt, that your doctor won't know unless you ask them about it. So, you have to feel empowered to bring up the conversation even if they don't bring it up.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 07:42

Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, the concerns that we're dealing with, you know, with erectile dysfunction, and urinary control, in some ways they're very personal, and having a good connection with your physician to be able to have some of that discussion and making sure that they're understanding things is really critical because the concerns are so personal and intimate, that it can be difficult to share.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:08

So, do men who survive prostate cancer need to be worried about cancer recurrence? I imagine that's always on the front of the mind of anyone who has survived a cancer diagnosis.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 08:19

Yeah, I mean, so, I think you're exactly right. I mean, while it is true, I mean, you know, we do have to monitor for cancer recurrence like we would for any type of cancer. I think it's also important to recognize that the cure rates are so high, right? The majority of men having treatment of prostate cancer will not have a recurrence in their lifetime. PSA screening is important in detecting prostate cancer. But really, PSA testing was developed to look for recurrence after men have had treatment for prostate.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:53

How interesting.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 08:53

There can be anxiety associated with testing. But frequently that testing is so accurate that we may actually detect recurrences years before men will actually have a symptomatic recurrence where they would feel something or understand something. So again, having that discussion with your doctor, following the guidelines that they're giving you, because each patient may be given slightly different guidelines and frequency of testing, really that is centered on their specific disease characteristics is really important. That's really interesting about the PSA tracking. Matt, earlier in our conversation you mentioned

support networks, which I think are obviously very important. What do family caregivers and friends need to know about supporting someone with a prostate cancer diagnosis? So, I think emphasizing to men that that support network is there, you know. I think this is one thing where frequently maybe people don't necessarily reach out. Every man is a little different with how intimate or how expressive they want to be with these very intimate issues. But, I think just expressing words of support. For partners, I think giving men time after a diagnosis, because just the mental changes, you know, the mental effect of having a new cancer diagnosis can take its own toll. And being supportive and understanding of that, and recognizing that many of these side-effects will get better with time. And it needs exactly that. It just needs a little bit of time and a little bit of effort. I think these are all really important issues for the whole group, the whole network that surrounds each of us to understand.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 10:45

I think that's a really good point, that people have different thresholds for sharing information. My husband likes to tell me that I'm an over-sharer. And I've been very outspoken about my diagnosis of breast cancer earlier this year. And my challenges going through that and have spoken about it. But some people don't feel that they want to speak out about their private medical issues. And so, it really is up to those close to that individual, to figure out how to support them best.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 11:13

I mean, absolutely. And I think the other factor would be too that given the commonality of prostate cancer, almost everyone at some point in their lives will know somebody that's had treatment for prostate cancer. So, reaching out to those members of our community that we all know, can be really important especially for men that are looking for extra support that just need a little extra guidance, recognizing, of course, that not everyone's journey is the same. And some people may have a little tougher road than others, but understanding that this is such a common disease that almost all of us will know people in our community that have been affected by it.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 11:52

Yes. And the onus is on the man himself to be able to help others help him if he needs it.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 12:01

Absolutely. And I think you're exactly right. I think given the personal and intimate nature of some of these issues, I think I'm getting to an understanding where you're comfortable speaking about these things, recognizing that this is something that happens to many people, and we'll find our way through it. I think that's important for men to recognize too.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 12:21

So, obviously Matt, when someone survives a cancer diagnosis that takes a big toll. There's a big psychological effect of that, a lot of energy put into that. But then once they've moved to the other side, and things have quieted down some, what can men do to improve their overall health after a diagnosis?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 12:41

Yeah, so and again, just referencing back to the point that most men with prostate cancer that are diagnosed with prostate cancer don't actually die of their disease, and the fact that we have really effective treatment for prostate cancer such that the survivorship or the effect of prostate cancer can be spread out over the course of decades potentially. So, I think, you know, maintaining an active lifestyle, you know, just because you have a diagnosis of prostate cancer does not mean by any stretch that you should be giving up your hobbies, the things you enjoy doing. In fact, in many ways, getting a diagnosis of prostate cancer should encourage more men to exercise, to eat, right. Because they're not likely to die of their prostate cancer, for many men this heralds kind of a new understanding of a focus on their health. And so, you know, recognizing that and engaging in generally healthy lifestyles is really important. And, if the prostate cancer diagnosis in some ways can serve as a way to encouragement to eat right, and exercise, and really to take care of themselves, I think in some men, this can actually be a blessing in disguise.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 13:53

That's a great perspective, a silver lining,

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 13:56

A silver lining.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 13:58

Matt, thank you for being here. Do you have any last words for our listeners today?

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 14:02

No, other than I just thank you for having me on. I think this is just such a critical issue in prostate cancer. But you know, really the light at the end of the tunnel here is we have effective treatments to manage almost all the side-effects that can come up, whether they be issues with body composition, or sexual function, or urinary control, just you know, understanding that these are common things, recognizing that your physician has likely heard this from many people before and really is well equipped to help manage and get through some of the issues that do arise.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 14:34

That is such an important message that you just have to ask about it, because you're not the first person.

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Dr. Matthew Tollefson 14:40

You're not the first person. And if your doctor doesn't know about it, they can't help you. So, make sure to bring it up.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 14:47
Thank you for being here, Matt.

D Dr. Matthew Tollefson 14:49
Yeah, of course. Thank you so much for having me.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 14:51
Our thanks to Dr. Matthew Tollefson for being here today to speak with us about survivorship after prostate cancer. Dr. Tollefson is a urologist at the Mayo Clinic, I hope that you learned something. I know that I did. And we wish each of you a very wonderful day.

N Narrator 15:08
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