

## September Prostate Cancer Month

September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer diagnosed in men and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men after lung cancer. About one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.

The American Cancer Society's estimates for prostate cancer in the United States for 2021 are: 248,530 new cases of prostate cancer and 34,130 deaths from prostate cancer

There are over 489,000 veterans in the Veterans Health Administration diagnosed with prostate cancer. Over 16,000 of those have metastatic cancer primarily due to the fact they were diagnosed late. African American veterans are at even greater risk for developing prostate cancer than the average population.

*Veterans exposed to Agent Orange have an increased incidence of prostate cancer; they develop the disease at a younger age and have a more aggressive variant than their unexposed counterparts. Consideration should be made to classify this group of individuals as 'high risk,' just like men of African-American heritage and men with a family history of prostate cancer. Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and develop prostate cancer may be eligible to receive VA disability benefits.*

The American Cancer Society recommends that men have a chance to make an informed decision with their healthcare provider about whether to be screened. The decision should be made after getting information about the uncertainties, risks, and potential benefits of prostate cancer screening. **Men should not be screened unless they have received this information.**

The discussion about screening should take place at:

**Age 50 for men who are at average risk** of prostate cancer and are expected to live at least 10 more years; \

**Age 45 for men at high risk** of developing prostate cancer. This includes African Americans and men who have a first-degree relative (father or brother) diagnosed with prostate cancer at an early age (younger than age 65);

**Age 40 for men at even higher risk** (those with more than one first-degree relative who had prostate cancer at an early age).

After this discussion, men who want to be screened should get the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. The Digital rectal exam (DRE) should be part of screening.

As an 18-year prostate survivor, Dr. Shelton was a panelist on September 15, 2021, at the Prostate Health Education Network 17<sup>th</sup> Annual PHEN Prostate Cancer Disparity Summit. Please visit [www.prostatehealth.org](http://www.prostatehealth.org) for additional prostate cancer information and the next two sessions.

--Artie L. Shelton, MD, Director Veterans Health Council