

Clinical trials

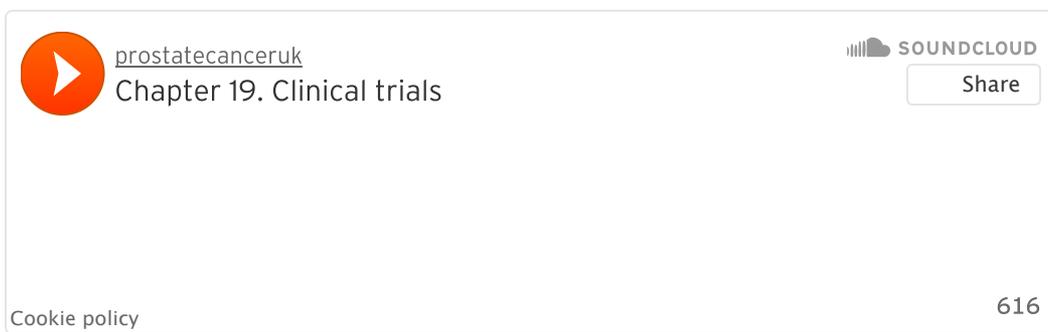
If you have prostate cancer, you might have the chance to take part in a clinical trial. For example, medical researchers might be testing a new treatment for your type of prostate cancer.

Before you decide if a clinical trial is right for you, think about the pros and cons, ask questions and find out what it involves.

Here we look at some of the big questions around clinical trials for prostate cancer.

[What treatments are available?](#)

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Chapter 19. Clinical trials

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What is a clinical trial?

A clinical trial is a type of medical research study. It aims to find new and improved ways of preventing, diagnosing, treating and managing illnesses. People are involved in the trial in a controlled and carefully planned way.

Clinical trials often test new medicines, medical procedures or medical equipment. Some trials also look at the way an illness or treatment makes people feel, or the effect on their relationships or daily life.

A guide to clinical trials

This fact sheet is for anyone affected by prostate cancer who wants to find out more about taking part in a clinical trial - a type of medical research.

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Why are trials done?

Clinical trials aim to answer questions, usually about a treatment or a procedure. The main questions are usually:

- Is it safe?
 - Does it cause side effects?
 - What is the best dose to use?
 - Does it work?
 - Does it work better than existing treatments?
 - How does it affect quality of life?
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What are trials looking into at the moment?

Clinical trials for prostate cancer look at many different areas, including:

- Prevention - whether medicines, vitamins, diet or physical activity can reduce men's risk of prostate cancer.
 - Screening - the benefits and risks of a national screening programme, where lots of men are tested for prostate cancer.
 - Diagnosis - trying out new tests or scans to improve the diagnosis of prostate cancer.
 - Treatments - testing new treatments or new ways of using existing treatments.
 - Quality of life - looking at how prostate cancer or its treatment could affect you in your daily life.
 - Counselling and complementary therapies - looking at ways to help men deal with the effects of prostate cancer.
 - Genetics and lifestyle studies - looking at whether certain genes or lifestyles (like smoking or exercise) can affect a man's risk of getting prostate cancer, or whether they affect the growth of the cancer.
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How are clinical trials done?

There are different ways of gathering evidence in cancer research. Trials are designed in different ways depending on what they're trying to find out.

Trials that look at treatments usually take place in four stages, called phases. If a phase is successful, the trial moves onto the next phase.

- Phase 1 finds out about safety and side effects, and if the treatments could work well in humans.
- Phase 2 looks at how well a treatment works, and collects more information about safety and side effects, and the best dose to use.
- Phase 3 tests a new treatment against the best existing treatment, if there is one available.
- Phase 4 happens after a new treatment is in use. Researchers collect information about long term risks and benefits.

Scientists design trials to make sure the results are reliable, for example they use methods known as randomisation, placebos and blinded trials. And before any trial begins, there is a long and thorough process to make sure it's as safe as possible.

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Taking part in a clinical trial is a personal decision. Without clinical trials and research studies we wouldn't have the treatments we have now.

Thousands of people volunteer every year to take part in these trials. But you have to decide if it's right for you.

If you find a trial that could be suitable for you, find out as much as you can about it. Each trial is different, but these are some of the potential advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

- You might be able to have newer and more effective treatments that aren't available outside the trial.
- You may have more regular check-ups, tests and support from doctors and nurses than usual - some people find this very reassuring.
- You will be helping to improve future cancer treatment for others.
- You may feel you're doing something positive about your health and taking an active role in your treatment and recovery.

Disadvantages

- You may have more frequent testing as well as treatment, which might be inconvenient. This can go on for a long time. Some people also find this makes them worry more about their cancer.
- You might not know in advance about all the possible side effects - the researchers themselves might not know them all yet.

- If the trial is randomised you won't get a choice about which treatment you have.
- If the trial is blinded, you won't know which treatment you are getting.
- The new treatment may turn out to be no better than the existing treatment.
- There is the risk that the new treatment may not help you, even if it helps others.

Whether you decide to take part in a trial or not, you should receive the highest standard of care and support available. Even if you don't get the new treatment, you will still have the best treatment currently available.

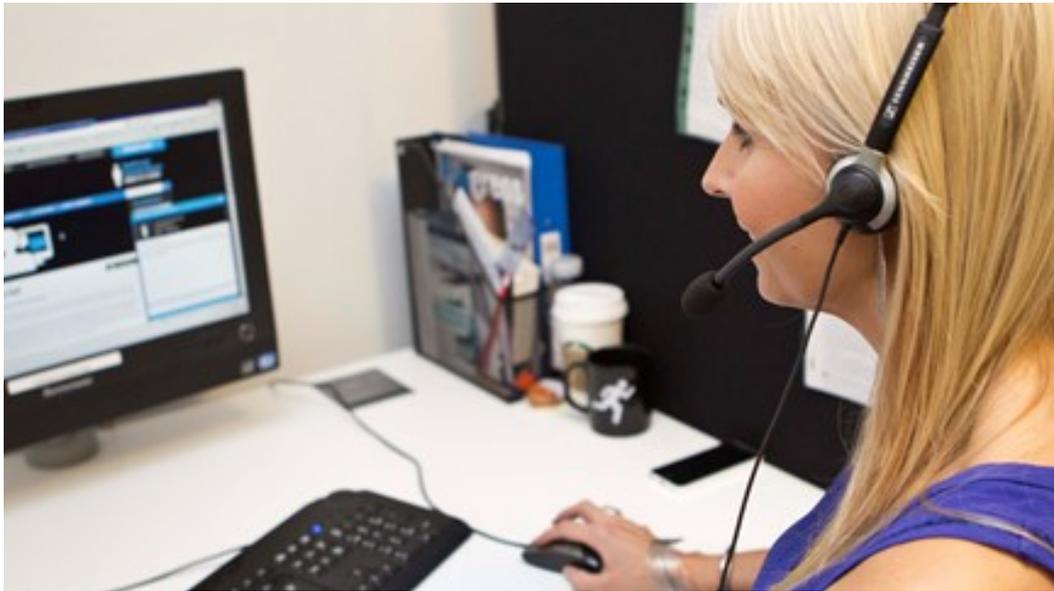
What does taking part in a trial involve?

If you decide to take part in a trial the research team will give you the full details of what it will involve. There will be differences between trials that depend on what the trial is investigating and what type of trial it is.

Normally being in a trial will involve:

- Getting information and giving your consent. The team should explain the trial to you in detail, and answer your questions before you agree to sign the consent form.
- Checks and tests before the trial. This is to check you are suitable for the trial and includes filling in forms or questionnaires, a physical examination, and having some tests.
- Visiting a hospital to have tests or treatments. You'll have regular check-ups as part of the study, which may be in addition to your usual hospital checks.

You can leave the trial at any time without giving a reason. But if you're happy to give a reason, it could help the research team design better trials in the future. If you leave the trial you will still have treatment for your cancer. You'll still be offered the standard treatments for your stage of cancer. Health professionals won't treat you differently because you've left a trial.



Our Specialist Nurses

Ask all the questions you need answers to, or just talk. Our nurses have time for you.

[Find out more](#)



Online community

Confront prostate cancer together. Join our online community and talk about what's on your mind - your questions, your ups and your downs.

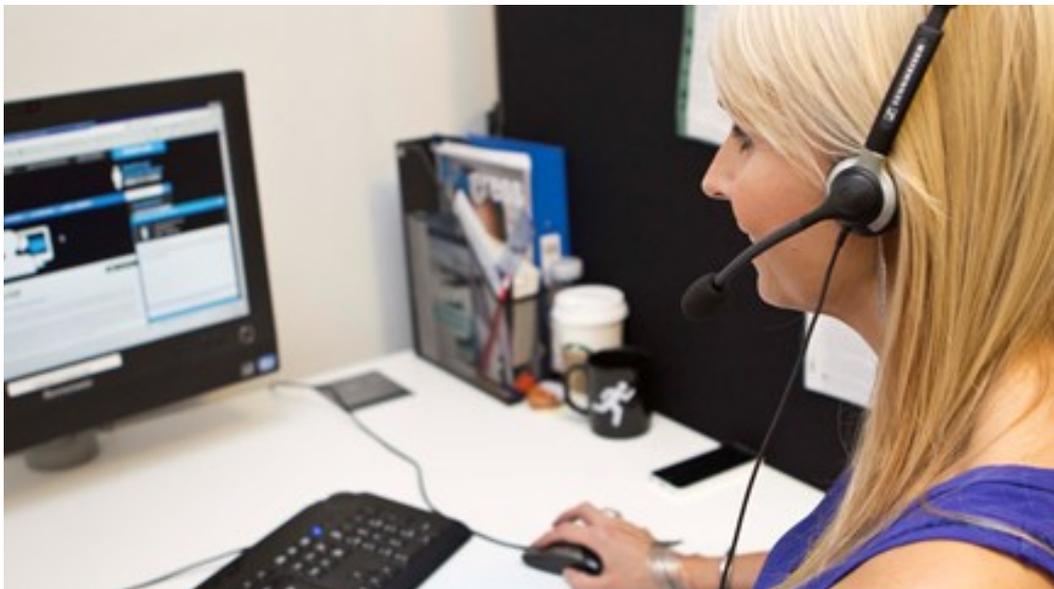
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How do I find out about trials for prostate cancer?

To find out about current clinical trials for men with prostate cancer you can:

- ask your doctor or nurse if there are any local or national trials that may be suitable for you
- call our Specialist Nurses for the most up-to-date information on clinical trials.
- search Cancer Research UK's lists of clinical trials in the UK - this only shows some of the current trials.

If you find a trial you're interested in, show the details to your doctor or nurse. They can help you decide if it's likely to be suitable for you.



Our Specialist Nurses

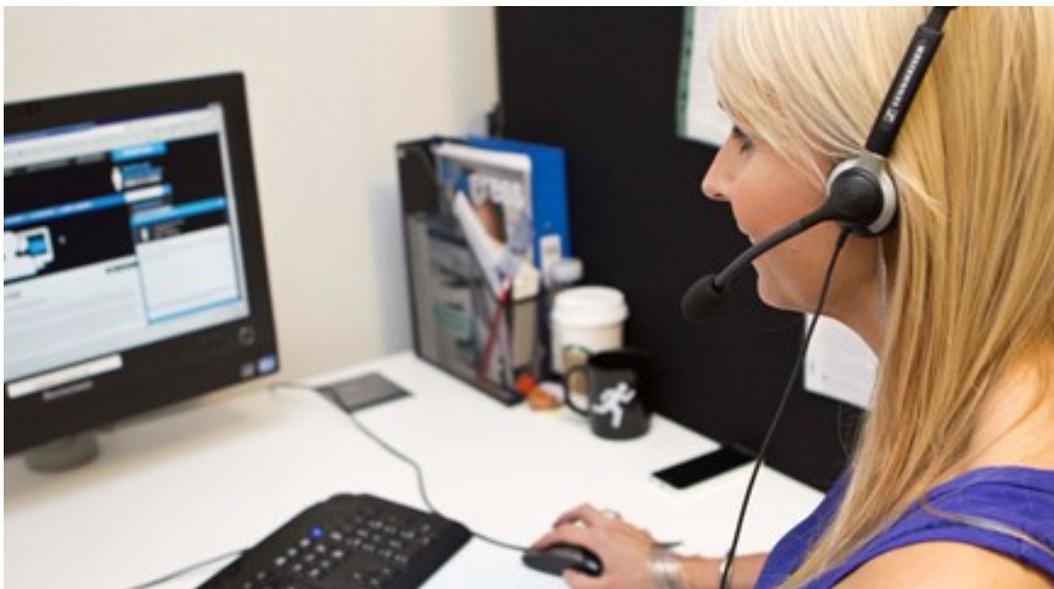
Ask all the questions you need answers to, or just talk. Our nurses have time for you.

[Find out more](#)

Where can I get support?

Deciding whether to take part in a clinical trial can be difficult. You might want to ask questions or raise concerns before, during and after a trial. When a trial ends you might also feel you need some support.

It could be useful to speak to your GP or other health professional, or call our confidential [helpline](#). You can get in touch with people who have had similar experiences, through your local prostate cancer support group or our [online community](#). If you'd rather speak one-to-one, try our [telephone one-to-one support service](#).



Our Specialist Nurses

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[Find out more](#)





One-to-one support

Anyone affected by prostate disease can talk with one of our trained support volunteers.

[Find out more](#)

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse

- Are there any clinical trials for prostate cancer that I could take part in?
- What will the trial aim to find out?
- What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part in the trial, including any possible side effects?
- What extra tests will I have if I take part in the trial?
- How long will the trial last?
- How soon could I start the trial?
- Will I need to travel to another hospital?
- Will my travel or other expenses be paid?
- What happens if something goes wrong when I'm on the trial? Am I covered by insurance?
- What support can I get during and after the trial?

- Who should I contact if I have questions while I'm on the trial?
 - If the trial is successful, will I be able to keep having the treatment after it ends?
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References

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[Full list of references used to produce this page](#)