

## Cryotherapy

Cryotherapy is a treatment that uses extreme cold to freeze and destroy cancer cells. It is also known as cryosurgery or cryoablation. Thin needles are inserted into the prostate and a gas is passed down them to freeze the prostate and kill the cancer cells.

You may be able to have cryotherapy if your cancer is contained inside your prostate ([localised prostate cancer](#)). And it can sometimes be an option if your prostate cancer is just breaking through your prostate but hasn't spread to the surrounding area ([locally advanced prostate cancer](#)).

Cryotherapy may be a treatment option for men whose prostate cancer has come back after treatment with [radiotherapy](#) or [brachytherapy](#). But you may also be able to have it as a first treatment. You may not be suitable for cryotherapy if you have severe urinary problems as it can make these worse.

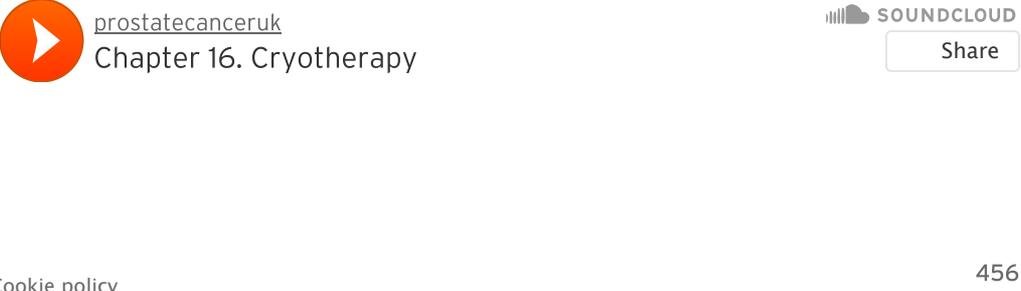
Cryotherapy is newer than some of the [other treatments](#) for prostate cancer. We don't know much about how well it works in the long term, including the risk of side effects. This means it is only available in specialist centres in the UK, or as part of a [clinical trial](#).

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## Types of cryotherapy

There are two types of cryotherapy.

- Whole-prostate cryotherapy freezes the whole prostate including healthy tissue.
- Focal cryotherapy freezes only the areas of the prostate where the cancer is.  
This means less healthy tissue is frozen compared to whole-prostate cryotherapy.

Focal cryotherapy isn't as widely available in the UK as whole-prostate cryotherapy. So when we talk about cryotherapy, we're referring to whole-prostate cryotherapy.

In the UK cryotherapy is only available in specialist centres or as part of a [clinical trial](#). This is because it is newer than some other treatments, and we don't know as much about how well it works in the long term, including the risk of side effects. Read more about [clinical trials](#).

Other treatment options

Other treatment options for localised prostate cancer include:

- [active surveillance](#)

- watchful waiting
- surgery to remove the prostate (radical prostatectomy)
- external beam radiotherapy
- brachytherapy- a type of internal radiotherapy.

You may also be offered high intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU). Like cryotherapy, HIFU might only be available in specialist centres or as part of a clinical trial.

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## What are the advantages and disadvantages?

An advantage for one person might not be for someone else. Speak to your doctor or nurse before deciding about the pros and cons of cryotherapy and other treatments. There is a list of questions further down that you might find helpful.

### Advantages

- Cryotherapy involves less invasive surgery than some other treatments, with little blood loss.
- You will only be in hospital for a short time and recovery time is quick.
- It may be a treatment option if your cancer has come back after radiotherapy or brachytherapy.

### Disadvantages

- You may get side effects that might affect your daily life, such as erection and urinary problems
- We do not know as much about how well cryotherapy treats prostate cancer or the side effects in the long term (after 10 or 15 years), compared with other treatments.
- Cryotherapy is not widely available in the UK.

#### What are the advantages and disadvantages?

- What does cryotherapy involve?
- What are the side effects?

- More information
- About us

This fact sheet is for men who are thinking about having cryotherapy to treat their prostate cancer. Partners and families of men with prostate cancer may also find this information useful. It is one of several fact sheets that have been written to help you decide which treatment best suits you.

This fact sheet describes how cryotherapy treats prostate cancer and what the side effects can be. Each hospital will do things slightly differently. Use this fact sheet as a general guide and ask your doctor or nurse for more details about the treatment you will have. You can also call our Specialist Nurses on 0800 074

known as cryosurgery or cryoablation. It is done using a number of thin needles (cryoneedles) which are inserted into the prostate gland under local or general anaesthetic. This process kills both cancer cells and healthy cells within the gland.

There have been improvements in cryotherapy in recent years, which have reduced the risk of side effects and improved the success of the treatment. However, we need more research to show whether cryotherapy is as good as other treatments in the long term. For more information on the side effects of cryotherapy see page 4.

## Cryotherapy

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## What does cryotherapy involve?

Each hospital does things differently. Ask your doctor or nurse how they carry out the treatment.

▼ [Before having treatment](#)

▼ [During treatment](#)

▼ After treatment

▼ What happens afterwards?

## What are the side effects?

Like all treatments, cryotherapy can cause side effects. These will affect each man differently and you may not get all of them.

Many of the side effects of cryotherapy are caused by healthy tissues being frozen and damaged. You are more likely to get side effects if you have already had [radiotherapy](#) or [brachytherapy](#) to your prostate. This is because they might have already damaged the tissues around your prostate. The most common side effects of cryotherapy are erection and urinary problems.

▼ Erection problems

▼ Urinary problems

▼ Pain

▼ Bowel problems



## What is focal cryotherapy

Focal cryotherapy is a new way of treating prostate cancer. It's not widely available in the UK but there are some hospitals that offer it.

It isn't suitable for all men and will depend on the size and position of your cancer. Speak to your doctor or nurse about whether it may be an option.

### What does focal cryotherapy involve?

Focal cryotherapy is done in a similar way to whole-prostate cryotherapy but it uses fewer needles, which are only inserted into the cancer rather than the whole prostate.

### What are the side effects?

Focal cryotherapy can cause the same side effects as whole-prostate cryotherapy. But research suggests that you may be less likely to get these side effects with focal cryotherapy and they may be less severe because less healthy prostate tissue is damaged.

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## Dealing with prostate cancer

Being diagnosed with prostate cancer can change how you feel about life. If you're dealing with prostate cancer you may feel scared, stressed or even angry. There is no 'right' way to feel and everyone reacts differently. There are things you can do to [help yourself](#) and people who can help.

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## Questions to ask your doctor or nurse

You may find it helpful to keep a note of any questions you have to take to your next appointment.

- What is the risk of side effects and how can they be managed?
- What are my other treatment options?
- How much experience does the specialist have in carrying out cryotherapy?
- How often will you check my PSA after the treatment?

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## References

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[Full list of references used to pro  
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