

**PROSTATE CANCER:**

# What Every Man Should Know

(AND NO ONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT)



## KEY WORDS TO KNOW

**Active Surveillance** | An option for some people with low-risk prostate cancer. Instead of immediate treatment, healthcare providers closely monitor the cancer with regular tests and exams. If the cancer shows signs of growing or becoming more aggressive, then treatment would be considered. It helps avoid unnecessary side effects of treatment.

**Biopsy** | A procedure where a small tissue sample is taken from your body, often using a thin needle. This sample is then sent to a lab and looked at under a microscope to see if cancer cells are present. It's the most definitive way to diagnose cancer.

**DRE (Digital Rectal Exam)** | A simple check where your healthcare provider gently feels your prostate gland with a gloved finger. They're checking for any lumps or changes that might be a sign of a problem.

**Biomarker Testing** | Sometimes called genomic testing or somatic testing. Think of biomarkers as clues in your body. They are like tiny pieces of information in your blood, urine, or tissue that can help healthcare providers understand what's happening with your prostate cancer. Biomarker testing looks for these clues to help your care team learn things like how aggressive your cancer might be, if it's likely to grow or spread, and what treatments might work best for you.

**Genetic Testing** | Looks for inherited mutations in your cells that may increase your risk of developing cancer. Think of genetic testing as looking for a family trait that could affect your health. Genetic testing is sometimes called germline testing.

**Gleason Score** | If you have prostate cancer, a healthcare provider will look at a tiny piece

of your prostate under a microscope. The Gleason Score is a number (usually between 6 and 10) that tells us how aggressive the cancer looks. A lower number means the cancer cells look more like normal cells and are usually less aggressive, while a higher number means they look more abnormal and are more aggressive.

**Patient Navigator** | A member of your healthcare team who acts as your guide throughout your cancer journey. They help you understand your diagnosis, explain treatment options, connect you with resources, and answer your questions. Think of them as your go-to person for support and information.

**Precision Cancer Therapy** | This approach to healthcare focuses on tailoring medical treatment to each individual patient. It uses information like your genes, your cancer's specific characteristics (from genomic testing), and your overall health to offer the treatments that are most likely to work for you and have the fewest side effects.

**PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen)** | A blood test that measures a protein made by your prostate gland. Higher levels can sometimes suggest prostate cancer, but many other things can also cause PSA to go up. It's often used along with other tests to get a full picture.

**Staging** | After a cancer diagnosis, staging is how healthcare providers figure out how much the cancer has grown and if it has spread to other parts of your body. It helps them determine the best treatment plan and what to expect. In prostate cancer, healthcare providers usually classify the stage as early-stage or localized cancer, locally advanced, and metastatic/advanced.



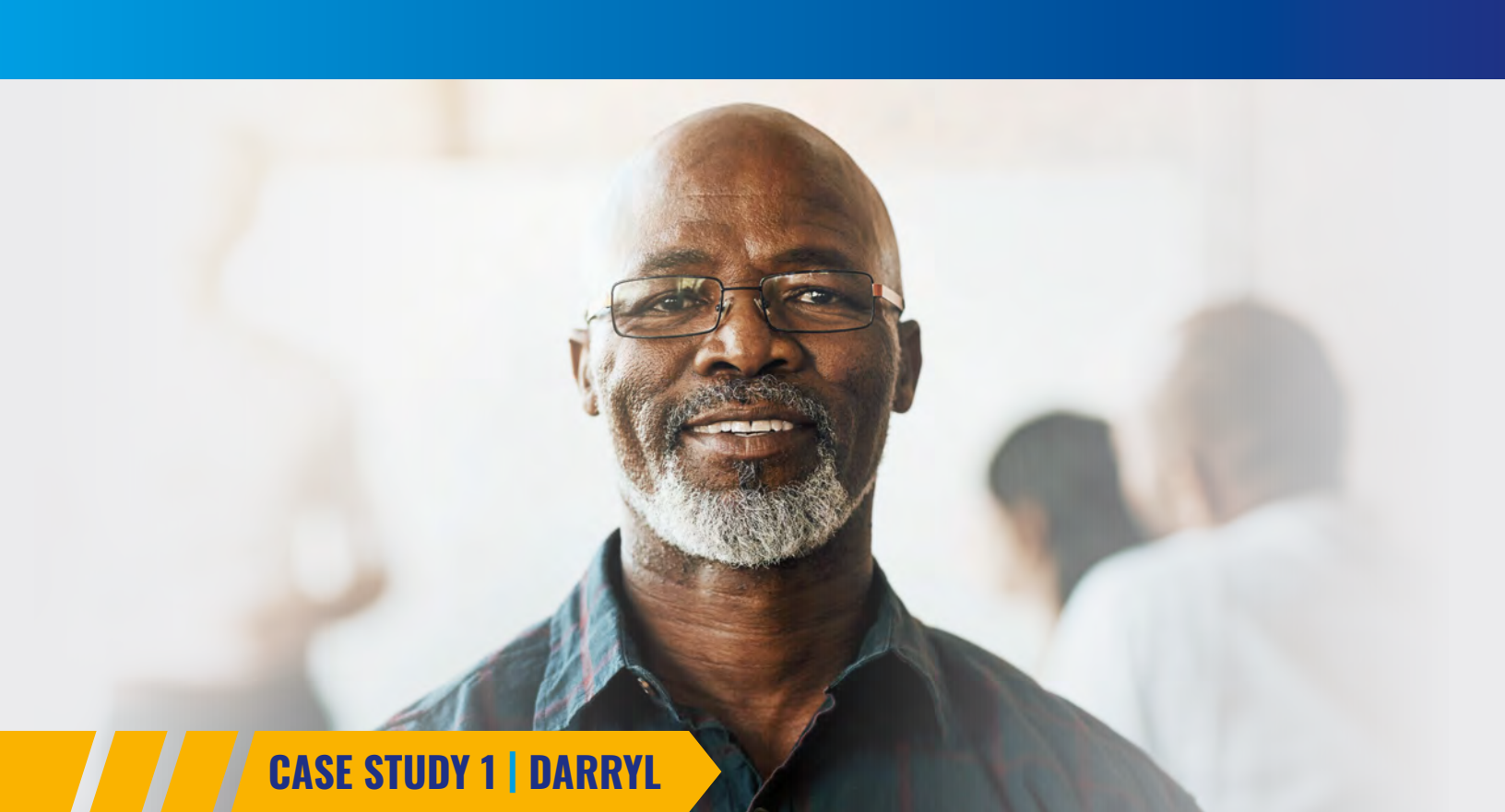
It's a conversation that can feel frightening, but understanding the facts and knowing your options can make all the difference. Prostate cancer, when caught early, is often highly treatable. Early detection is key, making regular screenings incredibly important. It's a stark reality that Black men are nearly twice as likely to die from prostate cancer compared to men of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, Black men are also more likely to benefit from early detection. This guide highlights the need for open conversations and proactive screening within the Black community.

## /// YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

**PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) Test:** This is a simple blood test that measures the level of PSA (a protein produced by the prostate gland) in your blood. Elevated PSA levels can sometimes indicate prostate cancer, though they can also be high due to other non-cancerous conditions like an enlarged prostate (BPH) or inflammation. The PSA test is a crucial tool for early screening and can help detect potential issues even before symptoms appear.

Some healthcare providers may use an additional screening through a **DRE (Digital Rectal Exam)**. During a DRE, a healthcare provider gently feels the prostate gland through the rectum to check for any abnormalities, such as lumps or hard areas.





## CASE STUDY 1 | DARRYL

Darryl, a 56-year-old African American man, had always been proactive about his health, largely because prostate cancer ran in his family. When his routine **PSA** test showed elevated levels, it was very concerning to him. A follow-up **biopsy** confirmed cancer, but Darryl still had questions. “It felt like a cloud hanging over me,” Darryl recalls. “I had this information, but no clear path forward. My urologist then introduced me to something called **biomarker testing**, and honestly, at first, the options felt incredibly confusing.”

The medical terminology and the weight of the decision were overwhelming. That’s when a prostate cancer **patient navigator** stepped in. She patiently walked Darryl through everything, explaining how the biomarker testing could provide a clearer picture of how aggressive his cancer might be. She emphasized how this information could potentially help him understand his treatment options.

“She explained that not all prostate cancers are the same,” Darryl shares, “and some are so slow-growing that immediate treatment might not be necessary, which was a huge relief to hear.” Based on his unique biomarker profile, Darryl made the informed decision to opt for **active surveillance**. This meant regular monitoring of his condition without immediate invasive treatment, allowing him to maintain his quality of life while keeping a close eye on his health.



### ***Make Your Move***



Make sure you understand your next steps and recommendations, and ***schedule any required follow-ups***. Establish your prostate health plan!



## WHAT ARE BIOMARKERS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Biomarker testing can provide key insights into how aggressive your cancer is. Think of the testing as giving your healthcare provider a deeper look inside your cells to understand the unique characteristics of your specific cancer.

- Biomarkers are measurable indicators of a biological state. For prostate cancer, these often involve analyzing gene expressions from tissue samples to predict cancer aggressiveness.
- Biomarker tests can help determine if you can safely delay or even avoid treatments like surgery or radiation. For some men, this means choosing active surveillance, where the cancer is closely monitored without immediate intervention.
- This testing allows healthcare providers to personalize treatment options specifically for you, based on your cancer's unique biology, not just its size or **stage**. This **precision cancer therapy** can reduce unnecessary surgery or radiation, minimizing side effects and improving quality of life.



### Make Your Move



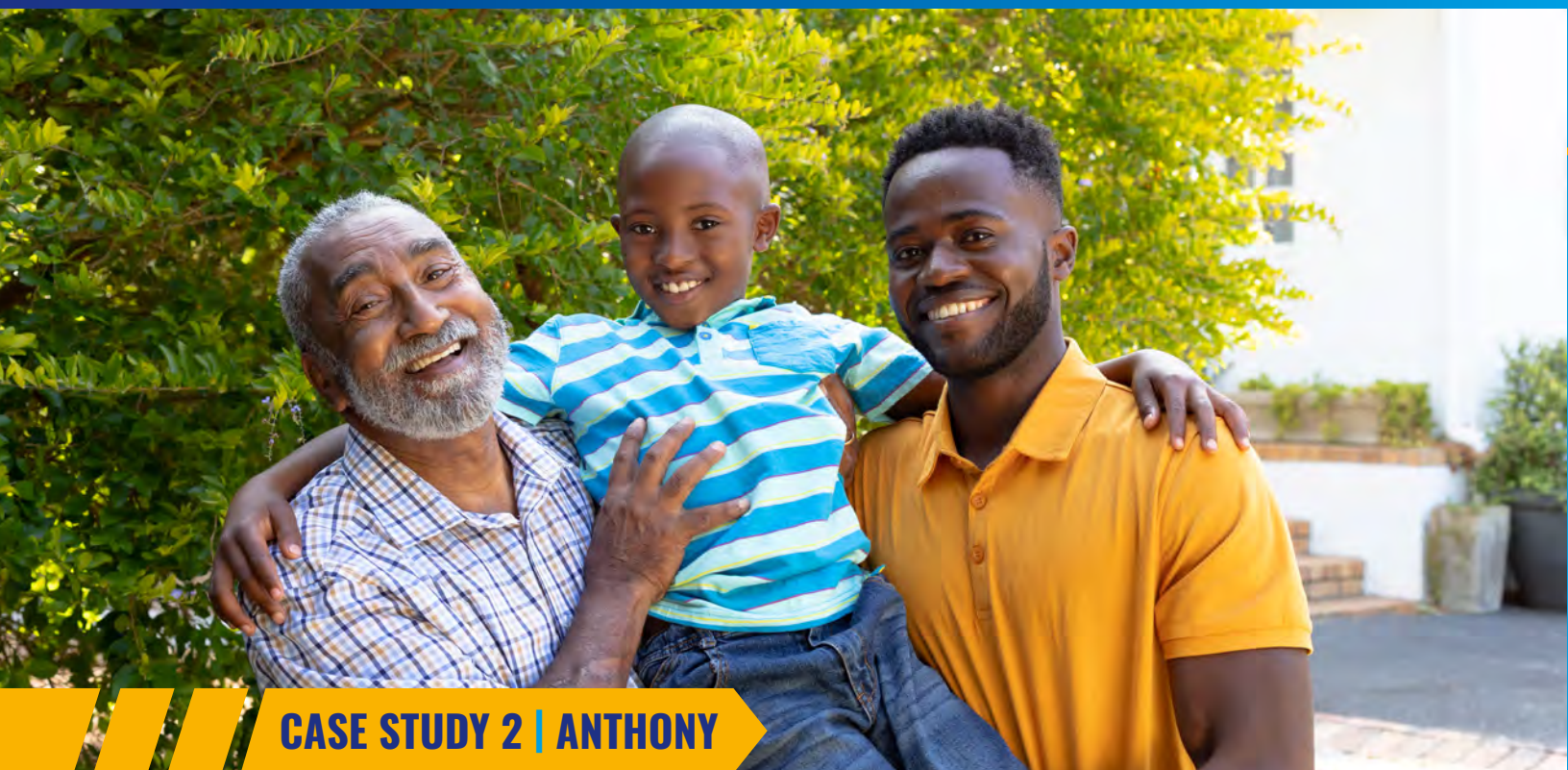
**Early detection** = more treatment options and better survival rates. Even if you feel fine, getting screened regularly, especially if you have risk factors, is a proactive step toward maintaining your health.

## UNDERSTANDING ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE

Darryl and his care team considered if he could “afford to wait.” This brings up the concept of **active surveillance** (sometimes called watchful waiting), an option for some men with low-risk prostate cancer:

- **What it is** | Active surveillance involves closely monitoring the cancer with regular PSA tests, **DREs**, and sometimes repeat biopsies or imaging. The goal is to delay or avoid aggressive treatment and its potential side effects until it's absolutely necessary.
- **Who it's for** | It's typically considered for men with very low-risk or low-risk, localized prostate cancer that is not expected to grow quickly.
- **Benefits** | It can help men avoid or delay the side effects of surgery or radiation, such as urinary incontinence and erectile dysfunction.
- **Considerations** | It requires diligent follow-up and can cause anxiety for some men who prefer immediate treatment.





## CASE STUDY 2 | ANTHONY

Anthony is 56 years old, born and raised in Richmond, VA. For most of his life, he's been the kind of guy who doesn't go to a healthcare provider unless something is "broken." But then, his older brother got diagnosed with prostate cancer at 59. That was a serious wake-up call, and he promised his wife he'd finally get checked out.

He went in for the blood test, and his **PSA** levels came back high. Then his doctor did a **DRE**... something Anthony avoided for years. But it wasn't nearly as bad as he thought! The healthcare provider said, "It's uncomfortable

for a moment, but it can give us more information and it's over in seconds." He was absolutely right. It was a brief moment of awkwardness for an important check.

A **biopsy** followed, and it was truly the tough part for Anthony, the waiting and the uncertainty of not knowing what came next and what the results would reveal. When the office finally called, they confirmed cancer.

Recognizing the importance of personalized care, Anthony's care team (including a urologist, radiation oncologist, and medical



### *Make Your Move*



***Talk with your healthcare provider about what your PSA results mean for you.*** They are best equipped to interpret your numbers in the context of your overall health. A single PSA number rarely tells the whole story, and should always be interpreted with your age, individual risk factors, and complete health history in mind.



oncologist) explained that they could order a biomarker test to analyze his specific cancer cells and see how his cancer might behave. Would it grow fast? Could he afford to wait before making a major treatment decision?

The biomarker results revealed no specific targetable mutations that would drastically alter his initial treatment path, but they did confirm the intermediate-risk nature of his cancer and provided a deeper understanding of its biological profile. This data, combined with his **Gleason score** and localized cancer **stage**, allowed the care team to confidently recommend external beam radiation therapy as the most appropriate and personalized treatment. This decision was made after a thorough discussion of all options, ensuring the chosen therapy was optimally matched to Anthony's specific cancer and overall health.

Anthony completed radiation therapy with manageable side effects and is in follow-up care, with an undetectable PSA. Now, he makes it a point to talk to the men in his church and at the barbershop about prostate cancer.

## //// KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

While early prostate cancer often has no symptoms, watch out for these signs. If you experience any of them, it's crucial to talk to your healthcare provider.

- Trouble urinating (e.g., difficulty starting or stopping)
- A weak or interrupted urine stream
- Blood in your urine or semen
- Pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or thighs

These symptoms don't always mean cancer, but they should never be ignored.

## //// ARE YOU HIGH-RISK?



You may be at higher risk for prostate cancer if:

- **You Are African American** | This group has the highest risk of developing prostate cancer and is more likely to experience aggressive forms of the disease.
- **You Have a Family History of Prostate Cancer** | If your father, brother, or son had prostate cancer, especially before age 65, your risk increases.
- **You are Over 50** | The risk of prostate cancer increases with age.

If you aren't sure about your family history, consider **genetic testing**.



## Make Your Move



If you're at high risk, talk to your healthcare provider about **starting prostate cancer screening before age 50**. Some men, particularly Black men or those with a strong family history, may benefit from beginning screening as early as 40 or 45. **When prostate cancer is detected early, the 5-year survival rate is nearly 100%.** This statistic alone highlights the power of early discovery.





### CASE STUDY 3 | KEVIN

Kevin is a 45-year-old educator who lives in Atlanta. Prostate cancer has been part of his life for a long time. His father passed away from it when Kevin was just 17. At the time, he didn't truly understand what was happening, only that his father kept his illness quiet, didn't catch it early, and by the time he finally sought help, it was tragically too late.

So, when Kevin turned 40, he told his healthcare provider that he wanted to start screening early. His healthcare provider affirmed he was doing the right thing. Because Kevin is African American and has a direct family history of the disease, he knew he was at a significantly higher risk.

His first **PSA** test came back high. After more testing, including a **biopsy**, Kevin was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. The news was difficult to hear, but his healthcare provider reassured him that significant advances in treatment had been made.

Since his cancer was more advanced, his healthcare provider recommended

**biomarker testing**. He explained that this kind of testing could help identify the specific makeup of Kevin's cancer. This information would allow them to determine if his cancer had certain mutations that might respond to a more targeted treatment. Kevin agreed, hoping this would give him the best chance at a positive outcome.

The biomarker testing results showed that Kevin's cancer had a specific genetic mutation. This was a critical discovery because it meant he was a candidate for a new type of targeted therapy designed specifically to attack cancer cells with this mutation, while minimizing harm to healthy cells. The knowledge was a game-changer, and altered how Kevin and his healthcare provider planned his treatment.

Now, instead of just receiving standard chemotherapy, Kevin got a treatment that specifically targets his cancer. He also talked to his younger brother and cousin about his experience, and they made a pact to stay on top of this as a family.

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD VS. WHAT'S TRUE

Let's address some common myths and set the record straight

WHAT WE'VE HEARD	THE TRUTH
"It's embarrassing."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most men who've had a <b>DRE</b> say it's an awkward moment that's over quickly. It's about your health, and often is only done after a high PSA result.</li></ul>
"Screening is only for old men."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• While risk increases with age, screening often starts between 40-50, especially if you're Black or have a family history.</li></ul>
"No symptoms = no problem."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prostate cancer has no noticeable symptoms in its early, most treatable <b>stages</b>. That's why screening is so vital.</li></ul>
"Clinical trials are only for people with a diagnosed condition."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinical trials are available for non-diagnosed conditions and help advance science.</li></ul>



### Make Your Move



**Talking openly**, whether in barbershops, churches, gyms, or with family, **helps dismantle stigma and fear surrounding prostate cancer**, ultimately saving lives. Share your story, encourage others, and foster a community of health awareness.



By staying informed and taking proactive steps, you can navigate your health journey with confidence and help ensure a healthier future for yourself and your community. Remember, early detection leads to more treatment options and better survival rates.

Have you had a conversation with your healthcare provider about prostate cancer screening?

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Below is a list of resources that can help you learn more about prostate cancer, understand your risks, and find support.

**Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF)** | Provides case management services and financial aid to Americans with chronic, life-threatening, and debilitating illnesses.

[www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

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**ZERO Prostate Cancer** | Focuses specifically on prostate cancer, providing educational resources, patient support, and advocacy for research.

[www.zerocancer.org](http://www.zerocancer.org)

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**ZERO360 Comprehensive Patient Support** | Offers free and confidential navigational assistance to prostate cancer patients and their families with financial and practical challenges that impact your ability to access healthcare.

[zero360.pafcareline.org](http://zero360.pafcareline.org)





## **ZERO**<sup>®</sup> PROSTATE CANCER

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 (800) 532-5274

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 (844) ZERO360