# Radical prostatectomy

How to prepare, what to expect and how to care for yourself at home

| ANAESTHESIA | HOSPITAL STAY | CATHETER | RECOVERY |
|---|---|---|---|
| general | 2 to 5 days | 7 to 10 days | about 4 weeks |

## What is it?

It is an operation to treat prostate cancer. It involves removing the prostate and the seminal vesicles and, depending on your disease, the lymph nodes in the pelvis (lymphadenectomy). The bladder is then joined to the urethra and a **catheter** is left in place so that this join can heal. The catheter is normally removed after 7 to 10 days.

## How is it done?

Always under **general anaesthetic**. It can be done in three ways:

- **Robotic:** the arms of the Da Vinci robot are inserted through several tubes less than 1 cm wide, and the urologist controls them from a console in the operating theatre. More information in Da Vinci robotic surgery.
- **Laparoscopic:** a small camera and instruments are inserted through those same tubes and the urologist handles them directly.
- **Open:** through an incision between the navel and the pubic bone.

## Before the operation

- **Informed consent.** We will ask you to sign a document authorising the operation.

- **Sexual activity.** It is advisable to ejaculate once or twice in the days before: this empties the seminal vesicles, which are removed with the prostate, and makes the operation easier.
- **Emptying the bowel.** The prostate lies against the rectum, so it must be emptied. We will tell you which method to use: 1 or 2 cleansing enemas, or drinking 2 to 3 litres of a bowel preparation solution. If your surgeon prefers another method, he or she will explain it.
- **Fasting.** Do not eat or drink anything for 6 to 8 hours before the operation: not even water, chewing gum or sweets, even if you do not swallow them.
- **Anaesthetic assessment.** The anaesthetist will ask you questions and examine you. Sometimes other tests are needed (for example, an exercise test) or the opinion of another specialist (cardiologist, pulmonologist, haematologist). We may ask you to stop or change some medication: please follow these instructions.
- **Preventing infection and blood clots.** We will give you antibiotics and heparin injections during your stay and also for a few days after discharge: 5 to 10 days for the antibiotic and up to 28 days for the heparin.

**Any questions?** We are here to help

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## When you get home

- The hospital stay usually lasts 2 to 5 days.
- It is normal to feel tired. You will need to rest for at least 4 weeks to make a full recovery.
- You may have pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen and sometimes in the neck, shoulders or legs.
- You will go home with a catheter connected to a urine bag, which you will keep for 7 to 10 days or as long as your urologist tells you.
- Bruising may appear around the wounds, and the scrotum and penis may swell, especially if lymph nodes have been removed.

## Wound care

- You will have several small wounds on your abdomen, closed with staples or stitches.
- Wash them once a day in the shower with water and mild soap.
- There is no need to cover them, unless they are irritated by rubbing against your clothes.
- Do not keep them wet for long (bath, swimming pool or beach) and keep them out of direct sunlight.

## Catheter care

- The catheter must always be connected to the bag. Make sure it does not kink or block, and do not let the bag fill up completely.
- Always keep the bag about 10 cm below the catheter, whether standing, sitting or lying down, so that urine drains on its own.
- **Never pull on the catheter.** Inside the bladder it has a balloon that stops it from coming out, which sits next to the join between the bladder and the urethra. If you pull, you can damage this join and it will also be very painful.
- You may notice spasms (contractions) in the bladder and urethra caused by the catheter, and sometimes a little urine or blood comes out around it.
- Wash the catheter in the shower with soap and water and dry it afterwards, as if it were part of your body. There is no need to wash the bag, but keep it clean and change it every 3 to 5 days.
- It is normal for the urine to be pink or the colour of red wine, and for small clots or debris to come out.

## When we remove the catheter

- You may notice burning when passing urine, some blood in your urine and a frequent or urgent need to pass urine.
- You may have urine leakage: use pads. It improves with time and with **pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises**. Bladder control usually returns within 3 to 6 months; some patients take up to a year.

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## When to call us

Call us on **+34 944 393 510** or go to the hospital Emergency Department if you have:

- A fever above 38 °C or shivering.
- The catheter stops draining urine or falls out.
- Heavy bleeding or clots in your urine that do not improve with drinking fluids.
- Severe pain that does not ease with painkillers.

This leaflet summarises general information about the operation. It does not replace your urologist's explanation or the informed consent form, which we will give you before the operation.

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