

### *June is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month*

Prostate cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer diagnosed in men in the United States and is the leading cause of cancer deaths in men. National estimates are that more than 186,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in 2008 and more than 28,600 men will die from the disease. In Kansas, 2008 estimates indicate that 1,350 new cases will be diagnosed and the disease will cause 220 deaths.

The prostate gland in men is about the size of a walnut and located just below the bladder. The urethra tube runs through the prostate. Nearly all prostate cancer starts in the gland cells. Although most prostate cancer is found in older men and is very slow growing, it can grow and spread quickly.

The chances of getting prostate cancer increase with age, race, nationality and family history. Risk can also depend on diet and exercise factors as well.

- Two out of three prostate cancers are found in men over the age of 65.
- Men with close family members, such as a father or a brother, who have developed prostate cancer at a young age, are more likely to develop the disease. High levels of male hormones also may play a part in developing prostate cancer.
- Prostate cancer is more common among African-American men and Jamaican men of African descent. The disease occurs less often in Asians than in Whites.
- Prostate cancer is more common in North America and Northwestern Europe and less common in Asia and South America.
- Studies suggest that a diet high in saturated fat also may be a risk factor.
- Men over the age of 65 who exercise vigorously and on a regular basis have a lower rate of prostate cancer.

It is possible to screen for prostate cancer before any symptoms develop, however studies have shown that this may not reduce the number of deaths from the disease. Screening should begin at age 50 and men should discuss with their health care professional the possible benefits and harms of being screened. The screening tests include a digital rectal exam to check the prostate for lumps and/or a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. The PSA test can detect early-stage prostate cancer but there is inconclusive evidence that it improves health outcomes for men.