Screening Key To Catching Prostate Cancer Early
By Raksha Joshi, MD
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, MONMOUTH FAMILY HEALTH CENTER, LONG BRANCH; NJ

Prostate cancer is one of the common forms of cancer affecting men in this country. Because this cancer displays no symptoms in its early stages, every man should know the facts. The Prostate Cancer Foundation of America offers the following information:

- One new case of prostate cancer is diagnosed every 2.5 minutes and a man dies of it every 17 minutes.
- After lung cancer, prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related death among U.S. men. One in seven men who have the cancer will die from it.
- The only established risk factors are age, ethnicity and a family history of the disease.
- Doctors don't yet know why, but the chances of developing prostate cancer increase rapidly after age 50.
- For reasons still unknown, black men are 65 percent more likely than white men to develop prostate cancer and more than twice as likely to die from it.
- Prostate cancer screening should begin for all men at age 50. Black men and males with a family history of prostate cancer should begin screenings at age 45.
- There is evidence of a link between high-fat diets and prostate cancer. In addition, recent studies show that the risk of dying from prostate cancer increases as a man's body weight increases.
- Screening tests such as a digital rectal examination (DRE) and a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test are the best detectors of the disease.

Even with all this bad news, there is encouraging data. The good news is prostate cancer grows relatively slowly and the five-year survival rate for patients diagnosed with it at any stage is still 98 percent. If detected early, the cancer might be completely curable. Radiation or hormone therapy, chemotherapy and surgery are possible treatment choices.

All men, particularly those at high risk, should discuss the possibility of prostate cancer with their physicians and follow through with the appropriate screening tests.

# # #