

Prostate Cancer Grading

What is cancer grading?

Grading is a scoring system used to describe how abnormal or aggressive your cancer cells look. This grading score helps doctors know how your tumor may respond to treatment. Grading may also be used by doctors when they determine overall survival rates.

What is the Gleason score?

The Gleason scoring system is used for grading prostate cancer. This scale gives cancer cells a score from 3 to 5. The grades of the two most common patterns of cells found inside the tumor are added together to give a total score. For example, cells with grades of 3 + 4 = a total grade of 7. Gleason scores normally range between 6 and 10. These scores are then grouped into 3 main levels:

- **Low-grade (well differentiated):** This type of slow-growing cancer looks the most like normal prostate cells and is the least dangerous. It has a Gleason score of 6.
- **Intermediate grade (moderately differentiated):** This type is somewhere between the low and high-grade cancers. This grade of prostate cancer can act like a high or low-grade cancer depending on the PSA level and amount of tumor present. It has a Gleason score of 7.
- **High-grade (poorly differentiated):** This type of cancer looks least like normal prostate cells. It grows very fast and it is the most serious type of prostate cancer. It can spread to other areas of your body such as your lymph nodes and bones. These cancer cells also tend to be large, hard to treat, and return more often. They have a Gleason score between 8 and 10.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.