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2,400 men diagnosed with prostate cancer annually, but survival rates are rising

• By JUDY SIEGEL

The prevalence of prostate cancer is falling in Jews and stable in Arabs, and survival rates are increasing in both communities, according to the Israel Cancer Association (ICA), which marked the global Prostate Cancer Awareness Day on Monday.

There are some 16,000 Israeli men who have been diagnosed with invasive prostate cancer, and around 2,400 were diagnosed annually, making it the most common type of malignant tumor in males.

The survival rate over five years is rising and has reached 93.3 percent, compared to just 85.2% some 15 years ago. In 2011, 432 Israelis died of prostate cancer.

Compared to foreign statistics, the disease rate in the country is similar to that in Europe, while the death rate in Israel is lower.

Among 20 OECD countries, Israel was 11th in prostate cancer rates, putting it in the middle, but death rates were lower than all the others.

According to the Dr. Lital Keinan-Boker, deputy head of the Health Ministry's Center for Disease Control, the risk for prostate cancer jumps after 50, and it is most common in men aged 70 to 74. It is the sixth most common cancer in Arab men and the third in their Jewish counterparts.

New research in Toronto on 565 men with an average age of 63 that examined their body-mass index found that obesity and overweight, as well as gained weight, raise the risk of pathological advancement of the disease by 1.5 times. Patients should therefore exercise and control their weight, the Canadian scientists recommended.

The ICA reported that men who carried the BRCA mutation that makes carriers at high risk for breast cancer are at higher risk for prostate cancer, as well as male breast cancer.

Genetics and age are the most important factors, but there are also factors within men's control.

According to a study conducted in Nebraska in the past year, taking aspirin daily reduced by 8.4% the risk of prostate cancer among carriers compared to those who did not take aspirin. Taking aspirin is already known to lower the risk of this type of tumor in the population in general.

Exercising vigorously and drinking coffee every day may also reduce the risk among carriers, but this was not clearly proven by the statistics.