

## STAGING SYSTEMS

Staging is important to help determine the plan of treatment. It is about trying to establish how involved the cancer is within the prostate, and assess its progression, outside the confines of the prostate.

### The TNM System (the current system)

The system that is mostly used now is the TNM system. This is an international classification used for almost every cancer. The **T** refers to the tumour, the **N** to the node or lymph gland status, and **M** for metastasis, which refers to the spread of cancer:

**T1** is when the tumour is small and **cannot be felt** with a finger examination (rectal examination or ultrasound). It is found either during a TURP (prostate re-bore surgery) or biopsy:

- T1a – feels normal but less than 5% of cancer found in the tissue removed during a TURP.
- T1b – feels normal but more than 5% of cancer found in the tissue removed during a TURP.
- T1c – feels normal but found on biopsy because of a raised PSA.

**T2** is when the tumour can be **felt** but is **confined** within the prostate:

- T2a – feels abnormal on *one half* of one side of the prostate.
- T2b – feels abnormal on *more than half* of the one side of the prostate.
- T2c – feels abnormal on *both sides* of the prostate.

**T3** is when the tumour extends beyond the prostate capsule and/or is spreading into the adjacent structures called **seminal vesicles**:

- T3a – feels like it extends *beyond* one or both sides of the prostate.
- T3b – feels like it extends into the seminal vesicles (secretory organs next to the prostate).

**T4** is when it is spreading beyond the seminal vesicles and into adjacent organs like the bladder, rectum or pelvis.

**N1** is when the tumour is found in lymph nodes nearby and **N0** is where no nodes are involved.

**M1** is when there is presence of metastatic disease and **M0** is where there is no detectable spread.