

# Healthy YOU

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# Beat Prostate Cancer

## Joe Slusser did

**Joe Slusser stays on top of his health.** The 60-year-old Allentown man visits his family medicine physician, Henry Liu, MD, annually for a physical exam and routine blood work, which includes a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. But after his exam in May 2010, Slusser got unexpected news. “Dr. Liu told me my PSA level was rising,” he says. He needed to have it retested in six months.

Various factors, such as inflammation or infection, can elevate a man’s PSA, a protein produced by the prostate gland. Rising levels of PSA over time, called PSA velocity, may indicate prostate cancer.

Slusser had his PSA level retested in November 2010; it was higher. To determine the cause, Slusser visited Liu’s colleague, urologic oncologist Angelo Baccala Jr., MD, with Lehigh Valley Health Network. Slusser underwent a prostate biopsy in December 2010. He was shocked when Baccala told him the results—aggressive prostate cancer.

**He isn’t alone in his diagnosis.** “It’s expected one in six men will get prostate cancer,” Baccala says. Most risk factors are uncontrollable, including being a male over age 50, being African-American and having a family history. Slusser’s paternal grandfather and maternal uncle both had the disease.

Due to the aggressive nature of Slusser’s cancer, he first was prescribed hormone therapy as a precaution in case the cancer had spread. Baccala then discussed Slusser’s treatment options with him—he could have radiation therapy or a prostatectomy, the surgical removal of the prostate. “I spoke with my wife, and we agreed surgery was best because I wanted the cancer out,” Slusser says.

**Last February,** Baccala performed a robotic prostatectomy using the da Vinci® robotic surgical system. It gives surgeons the ability to perform complex and delicate surgery with unmatched precision. Patients have less pain, a shorter hospital stay and faster recovery than with traditional surgery.

Due to the location of the prostate, side effects from a prostatectomy can include impotence and incontinence. Yet by working with their doctor, men can manage, improve or eliminate these side effects over time through treatments such as physical therapy and Kegel exercises to strengthen pelvic muscles.

Slusser’s surgery went well. He recovered quickly and needed minimal pain medication. “His active participation in his care and recovery made the difference,” Baccala says. Now Slusser is back to his job as an engineer at Air Products, and he’s staying active on the tennis court. “I feel my surgery and recovery couldn’t have gone better,” he says.

**Next Step:** *Learn more about prostate cancer screening and treatment, and get facts about PSA testing. Visit [lvhn.org/healthyyou](http://lvhn.org/healthyyou) or call 610-402-CARE.*

