

CASE STUDY

MARCUS' STORY

“BINS ARE NEEDED FOR MEN'S DIGNITY”

Dublin man backs campaign for sanitary bins for men to live well after prostate cancer.

Marcus Humphries, 59, from Dublin is currently living with prostate cancer. Marcus is a delivery driver for pHS Ireland and has worked with the company as a service driver for around 18 years installing and repairing washroom products for the hygiene provider.

Marcus was diagnosed with prostate cancer in September 2021, four years ago, at the age of 55.

I was having problems with the old waterworks when I was going to the loo, and I thought it was a bladder infection, you know, a one-off thing. I went to the doctor, and he sent me straight to the hospital.

My PSA, which is the blood test taken to assess likelihood of prostate cancer was very, very high and my prostate was very enlarged.

The doctor suggested the best option was chemotherapy and I started treatment the following January.

The cancer had gone from my prostate, and had spread into my lymph nodes, my femur, one hip and one rib.

One rib? How does it spread to one rib?

I've now read that prostate cancer is a strange sort of cancer in terms of how it spreads, I've been told it could go anywhere, to your brain; your foot, anything.

I was on chemo for six months and in every two weeks. It wasn't too bad.

I was able to drive myself there and back, with no problems, but I'd suffer the few days afterwards. I wouldn't leave the house for a day or two afterwards, because I'd be afraid I wouldn't make it to the bathroom in time.

In terms of the longer-term incontinence lots of men suffer with, I'm thankfully all right by now, I'm very lucky. Before I was diagnosed, I did have leakages, and I was hiding it very well.

When I started having problems, I blamed it a past spinal injury and put off going to the doctor, but it eventually got so bad that I had to go to the doctor. And that's when I found out I had cancer. I should have gone sooner. If I had, I would probably be in a hell of a lot better state than I am now.

I was unaware of any support available after your treatment and diagnosis. And so few men talk about the issues that they have afterwards. There's even someone in my office who was having treatment at the same time as me, but we don't talk about the treatment or the issues that come along with it.

I had a catheter in for nine months during and after my treatment. I would be out and about and trying to get on with things, with life you know? I'd want to change the bag because it might be leaking slightly or there'd be a smell coming from it and you'd feel

self-conscious about it, but there would be nowhere with a bin in the cubicle for you to change it. So, I used to come home, which, if you're out for a day out or something like that, could be frustrating.

MY WIFE WOULD NOTICE THE SMELL OR THAT I WAS ANXIOUS, AND THEN SHE'D ASK, "DO YOU WANT TO GO BACK HOME?" AND I'D HAVE TO FLY HOME AND GET CHANGED AND CHANGE THE BAG.

It made me a little more nervous of going out in general. I would often have had a spare bag with me, which I would have been able to change it in the toilet, in privacy and it would have been grand, but there were never any bins in the toilets and I just didn't want to carry that out to a general bin out in public for someone else to deal with. So, I would head home and do it. Sometimes I would go back out. Often, I wouldn't want to. Once you're home, you're home, and you don't want to do that all over again.

Don't get me wrong, I didn't limit myself. I've done really everything. I couldn't really care less. When the doctors diagnosed me, and they told me how bad the cancer was, I was very much of the attitude that I was going to live my life no matter what, but it was still a pain. I wanted to go to those weddings, my granddaughters' birthdays, parties and whatever, but it was still a pain. But I think positive thoughts and go with the flow.

That's why I wanted to speak up about incontinence facilities for men, because I think it'll help some men in the long-term. It's needed for their dignity, you know? It's the same as with period products for women and bins, women need these things and men need them too, it's time we opened up about it.

I know this is an issue, because of my job, I know cisterns and toilets are blocked up because men are hiding their used pads in there. Because they don't have anywhere else to put them. Getting a bin is such a simple thing that could make lives easier. I hope people will step up.

And I hope the bins can go on and raise awareness. If they're there in toilets, people will talk about them and I hope this will help men talk about prostate cancer more, get tested earlier. Getting tested and diagnosed early will make all the difference.

I wish I'd have gone earlier. By now I'm on four tablets a day to control the cancer. It's affecting my bones, and I've ended up with osteoporosis, so I get an injection for that, as well as a hormone injection which reduces my testosterone and that comes with its own complications.

My message to men would be – go and talk to your doctor. Start the conversation about prostate cancer. It's as simple as that.

Find out more information at
phswashrooms.ie/male-incontinence

