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 1 to 10. 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 $3 + 4 = 7$. Gleason scores normally range between 4 and 7. 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 4 or less.

- **Intermediate grade (moderately differentiated)**: This type is somewhere between the low and high-grade cancers and the most common of the three. Depending on PSA level and how much tumor there is, it can act like a high or low-grade cancer. It has a Gleason score between 4 and 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.
What is the TNM grading system?

The TNM grading system is based on 3 pieces of information:

- **T:** The tumor size and if it has spread into your nearby tissues.
- **N:** If cancer has spread to your lymph nodes.
- **M:** If cancer has spread (metastasized) to other parts of your body.

A number is added to each letter to show the size of the tumor or how the cancer has spread.

**T Status**

- **Stage T1:** Microscopic tumor in your prostate and not able to be found by a digital rectal exam (DRE) or ultrasound.
- **Stage T1a:** Tumor found in 5% or less of your prostate tissue sample.
- **Stage T1b:** Tumor found in more than 5% of your prostate tissue sample.
- **Stage T1c:** Tumor is found by a needle biopsy as a follow-up to an elevated PSA result.
- **Stage T2:** Tumor in your prostate and may be found by DRE or ultrasound.
- **Stage T2a:** Tumor found in less than ½ of a lobe of your prostate and may be found by DRE.
- **Stage T2b:** Tumor found in more than ½ of a lobe of your prostate and may be found by DRE.
- **Stage T2c:** Tumor found in both lobes of your prostate and can be found by DRE.
- **Stage T3:** Tumor has spread through your prostate.
- **Stage T3a:** Tumor has spread to outside of your prostate, on one or both sides.
- **Stage T3b:** Tumor has spread to one or both of your seminal tubes, where semen is made.
- **Stage T4:** Tumor has spread outside your prostate to your bladder, external sphincter and/or your rectum.
N Status

- **Stage N0**: Cancer cells have not spread to your pelvic lymph nodes.
- **Stage N1**: Cancer cells have spread to a single lymph node in your pelvic area and are 2 cm or less in size.
- **Stage N2**: Cancer cells have spread either to one or more lymph nodes and are 2 to 5 cm in size.
- **Stage N3**: Cancer cells have spread to your lymph nodes and are larger than 5 cm in size.

M Status

- **Stage M0**: Cancer cells have not spread outside your nearby lymph nodes.
- **Stage M1**: Cancer cells have spread outside your pelvic area to other parts of your body.