

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test

Should I have a PSA test?

DECISION POINT: You may want to have a say in this decision or you may simply want to follow your doctor's recommendation. Either way, this information will help you understand what your choices are so that you can talk to your doctor about them.

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test

Use this Grid to help you and your healthcare provider decide whether or not you will have a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. This test measures the amount of activity in your prostate. Men usually consider this test when they are aged 50 or older.

| Frequently asked questions | Having a PSA test | Not having a PSA test |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| If my PSA level is high, what are the chances that I have prostate cancer? | 30 out of every 100 men with a high PSA level (30%) have prostate cancer. Other causes of a high PSA level are inflammation and infection | If you choose not to get the PSA test then you will not know your PSA level. |
| If my PSA level is normal, can I be sure that I don't have prostate cancer? | No, you cannot be sure. About 15 out of every 100 men (15%) with a normal PSA level do have prostate cancer. | If you choose not to get the PSA test then you will not know your PSA level. |
| Will getting the PSA test reduce my risk of dying from prostate cancer? | At most, 1 death is prevented for every 1,000 men who get the PSA test (0.1%). 4 out of every 1,000 men who get the PSA test (0.4%) will still die from prostate cancer. | 5 out of every 1,000 men who do not get the PSA test (0.5%) will die from prostate cancer. |
| What are the advantages? | If you are found to have an aggressive cancer you could benefit from early treatment. 33 out of every 100 prostate cancers found (33%) are aggressive. 10 out of every 100 aggressive cancers treated (10%) will benefit from early treatment. | You will avoid the risks associated with the biopsies and treatments that could follow an abnormal PSA test. |
| What are the risks? | Because it is difficult to tell if a cancer is aggressive, you may undergo biopsies and/or treatments that would never have caused you problems. 67 out of every 100 prostate cancers (67%) are not aggressive and do not cause problems if left untreated. Biopsies and treatments carry risks. | You lose the small chance of catching an aggressive cancer that would be found with a PSA test and would benefit from early diagnosis and treatment. |
| What risks are associated with a prostate biopsy? | About 30 out of every 100 men who have a biopsy (30%) will develop problems afterwards such as infection, pain or bleeding that lasts a few days. | You will avoid these risks if you do not get the PSA test because you will not be offered a prostate biopsy. |
| What are the risks associated with prostate cancer treatment? | About 30 out of every 100 men treated for prostate cancer (30%) have longstanding problems with erections, and about 20 out of every 100 men (20%) will leak urine. | You will avoid these risks if you do not get the PSA test because you will not be offered treatment. |
| What are the National recommendations? | Does not apply. | The US Preventive Services Task Force does not recommend testing if there are no risks or symptoms. The American Cancer Society and the American Urological Association recommend that men discuss this issue with a healthcare professional. |

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test

Prostate cancer is a serious condition. The prostate specific antigen (PSA) test is a blood test to see if you might have prostate cancer and to monitor treatment for prostate cancer.

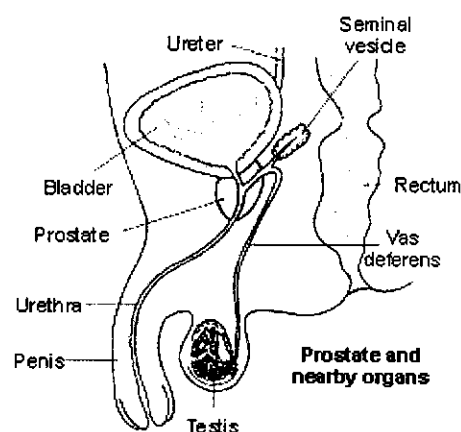
The PSA blood level is also increased in other conditions. So having an increased PSA test result does not mean that you have prostate cancer. Experts disagree on how useful the PSA test is. There is a lot of ongoing research about PSA.

What is the prostate gland?

The prostate gland (just called prostate from now on) is only found in men. It lies just beneath the bladder. It is normally about the size of a chestnut.

The tube which passes urine from the bladder (this is called the urethra) runs through the middle of the prostate. The prostate's main function is to produce fluid which protects and enriches sperm.

The prostate often gets bigger (enlarges) gradually after the age of about 50. By the age of 70, about 8 in 10 men have an enlarged prostate. It is common for older men to have urinary symptoms caused by a non-cancerous (benign) enlargement of the prostate. Some men also develop prostate cancer.



What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is a cancer which develops from cells in the prostate gland. Most cases develop in men over the age of 65.

Prostate cancer is different to most other cancers because small areas of cancer within the prostate are actually very common, especially in older men. These may not grow or cause any problems for many years (if at all).

What is a PSA test?

The PSA test is a blood test that measures the level of PSA in your blood. PSA is made by the prostate gland. The PSA level in your blood stream is measured in nanograms per millilitre (ng/mL).

When you have a PSA test, you should not have:

- an active urine infection;
- ejaculated (produced semen during sex or masturbation) in the previous 48 hours;
- exercised heavily in the previous 48 hours;
- had a prostate biopsy in the previous six weeks; or
- had a rectal examination (examination of the back passage with a gloved finger) in the previous week.

Each of these may produce an unusually high PSA result.

If you decide to have a PSA test, your doctor will give you a digital rectal examination (examination of the back passage with a gloved finger) to feel the prostate. This is to find out if the prostate is enlarged or feels abnormal in any way.

What is a normal result?

The normal range changes as you get older.

- If 3.0 or higher for men aged 50-59 years
- If 4.0 or higher for men aged 60-69 years.
- If higher than 5.0 for men aged 70 years or older.

The higher the level of PSA, the more likely it is to be a sign of cancer.

The PSA test can also miss cancer. 15 out of 100 men with prostate cancer will have a normal PSA result. A one-off test is not reliable and repeating the test may provide important information.

What causes a raised PSA level?

A raised PSA level may mean you have prostate cancer but about 2 out of 3 men with a raised PSA level will not have prostate cancer.

Other conditions may also cause a raised PSA level, including:

- Acute retention of urine (unable to pass urine, causing an enlarged bladder).
- Enlargement of the prostate which is non-cancerous (benign).
- Older age. Urine
- infection. Acute prostatitis.
- Transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) operation. TURP is an operation used to remove the prostate if you have benign enlargement of the prostate.
- If you have a catheter to help pass urine

What happens after a PSA test?

If your PSA level is not raised

You are unlikely to have cancer. No immediate further action is needed, but you may need further tests to confirm the result.

If your PSA level is slightly raised

You probably do not have cancer. You might need further tests, including more PSA tests.

If your PSA level is definitely raised

Your PCP will refer you to see a doctor who is a specialist for further tests to find out if you have prostate cancer. The specialist will usually arrange for you to have a biopsy of your prostate gland.

View this article online at www.patient.co.uk/health/prostate-specific-antigen-psa-test.

Ottawa Family Decision Guide

For Families Facing Tough Health or Social Decisions



1 Clarify the decision.

What decision do you face? Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test

What is your reason for making this decision?

When do you need to make a choice?

How far along are you with making a choice?

Have not thought about the options Close to making a choice
 Thinking about the options Already made a choice

2 Explore the decision.



Knowledge

List the options and main benefits and risks you already know.



Values

Use stars (★) to show how much each benefit and risk matters to you. 5 stars means that it matters "a lot". No stars means "not at all".



Certainty

Consider the option with the benefits that matter most to you and are most likely to happen. Avoid the options with the risks that matter most to you.

| | Reasons to choose this option (Benefits / Advantages / Pros) | How much it matters Use 0 to 5 ★s | Reasons to avoid this option (Risks / Disadvantages / Cons) | How much it matters Use 0 to 5 ★s |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Option #1 | | | | |
| Option #2 | | | | |
| Option #3 | | | | |

Which option do you prefer?



Support

Who else is involved?

What role do you prefer in making the choice?

Who?

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| #1 | #2 | #3 | Unsure | #1 | #2 | #3 | Unsure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Option you think this person prefers?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| #1 | #2 | #3 | Unsure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |





Share the decision with...
 Decide myself after hearing views of...
 Someone else decides...

Option you think this person prefers?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| #1 | #2 | #3 | Unsure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Share the decision with...
 Decide myself after hearing views of...
 Someone else decides...

3 Identify decision making needs.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | Knowledge | Do you know the benefits and risks of each option? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|  | Values | Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|  | Support | Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| | | Are you choosing without pressure from others? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|  | Certainty | Do you feel sure about the best choice for you? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Adapted from The SURE Test © 2008 O'Connor, Légaré.

People who answer "No" to one or more of these questions are more likely to delay their decision, change their mind, feel regret about their choice or blame others for bad outcomes. Therefore, it is important to work through steps two ② and four ④ that focus on their needs.

4 Plan the next steps based on needs.

Decision making needs

Things you would like to try



Knowledge

If you feel you do NOT have enough facts

- Find out more about the options and the chances of benefits and risks.
- List your questions.
- Note where to find the answers (e.g. library, health professionals, counsellors):



Values

If you are NOT sure which benefits and risks matter most to you

- Review the stars in the balance scale to see what matters most to you.
- Find people who know what it's like to experience the benefits and risks.
- Talk to others who have made the decision.
- Read stories of what mattered most to others.
- Discuss with others what matters most to you.



Support

If you feel you do NOT have enough support

- Discuss your options with a trusted person (e.g. health professional, counsellor, family, friends).
- Find help to support your choice (e.g. funds, transport, child care).

If you feel PRESSURE from others to make a specific choice

- Focus on the opinions of others who matter most.
- Share your guide with others.
- Ask another person involved to complete this guide. Find areas of agreement. When you disagree on facts, agree to get more information. When you disagree on what matters most, consider the other person's opinion. Take turns to listen to what the other person says matters most to them.
- Find a neutral person to help you and others involved in the decision.

Other factors making the decision DIFFICULT

List anything else you need: