

PSA testing and prostate cancer: Advice for well men aged 50 and over

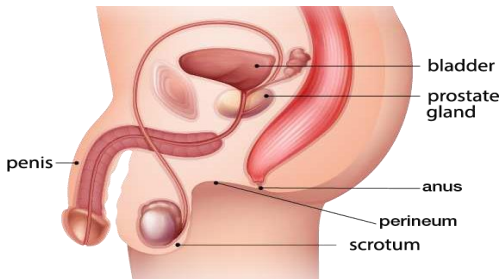
The prostate specific antigen (PSA) test may help find out if you are more likely to have prostate cancer. It is not perfect: it will not help find all prostate cancers, it will miss some and will detect some that would never go on to cause harm.

This information should help you decide if you want to have the test or not.

If you notice anything that is not normal for you, or are worried, you should speak to your GP.

Prostate cancer

The prostate gland lies just below your bladder. It helps produce healthy sperm. Problems with the prostate gland can affect how you urinate and your sexual function.



Prostate cancer is caused when some cells in the prostate start to grow out of control. Slow-growing cancers are common. They may not cause any symptoms or shorten your life.

Symptoms Most early stage prostate cancers do not have any symptoms.

Risk

You are at higher risk of prostate cancer if you:

- are aged 50 or older
- have a close relative, for example brother or father, who has had prostate cancer
- are of black ethnic origin (double the risk)

PSA test

PSA is measured using the PSA blood test. Most men will not have a raised PSA level. A raised PSA level can be caused by many things, such as a urinary infection, an enlarged prostate or prostate cancer.

Should I have a PSA test?

Having a PSA test is a personal decision. If you decide you want a PSA test, refrain from vigorous exercise such as cycling or sex in the 2 days before the test.

Advantages

A PSA test can help pick up prostate cancer at an early stage before you have any symptoms.

Disadvantages

The PSA test can miss prostate cancer. 1 in 7 men with a normal PSA level may have prostate cancer, and 1 in 50 men with a normal PSA level may have a fast-growing cancer.

If your PSA level is raised you may need a biopsy. This can cause side effects, such as pain, infection and bleeding. Not all men will need to have a biopsy.

Find out more at www.nhs.uk/psa

