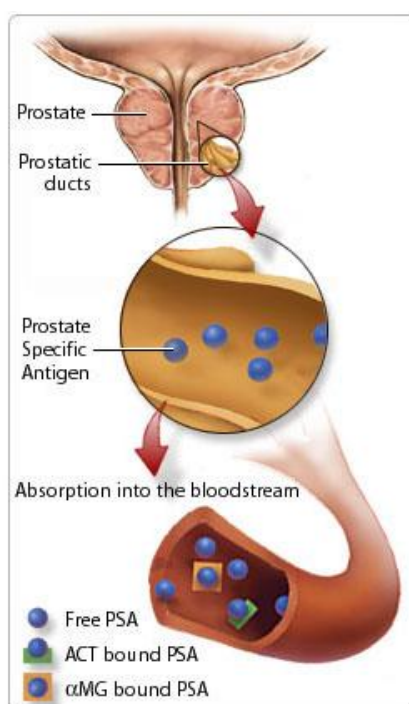


Advice to patients requesting PSA (prostate-specific antigen) measurement: frequently-asked questions

What is the aim of this leaflet?

Prostate cancer is a serious condition. The PSA test, which can give an early indication of prostate cancer, is available to you if you want to be tested. However, experts disagree on how useful the PSA test is. This is why there is a lot of research and why there is no national screening programme for prostate cancer in the UK. The aim of this leaflet is to give you a balanced view about the PSA test and to raise matters which you may wish to think about. We hope it will help you decide whether or not you should have the test but there is, of course, no simple right or wrong answer. You may want to talk about this information with your doctor or a trained practice nurse and, in addition, you may wish to speak to your partner about it.



What is the prostate?

The prostate is a sex gland which lies just below the bladder in men. It provides fluid to help produce healthy sperm. The prostate surrounds the tube (called the urethra) that carries urine out through the penis. Because of this, problems affecting the prostate gland can sometimes affect how you urinate as well as possibly changing your sexual function.

Prostate cancer is the commonest cancer and the second most common cause of cancer death in men in the UK. Each year in the UK, about 35,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and 10,000 die from the disease. Prostate cancer is less common in men below the age of 50 years and the average age for diagnosis is 70 to 74 years. The risk is greater for men who have a family history of prostate cancer and in black-African or black-Caribbean men. Prostate cancer is also more common in developed, western countries, suggesting that there may be a link with lifestyle factors such as diet.

Prostate cancer can grow very slowly or very quickly. Slow-growing cancers are common and may not cause symptoms or shorten life.

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Prostate cancer is less common in men under the age of 50 years.

What is a PSA test?

The PSA test is a blood test that measures the level of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is made by the prostate gland and some of it will leak into your bloodstream, depending on your age and the health of your prostate.

Although the PSA test is often done to detect cancer in men who have problems passing urine and is also used to help in the treatment of men who are known to have prostate cancer, it can also detect early prostate cancer before it causes symptoms or any abnormality of the prostate.

Although using the PSA test in this way to screen for prostate cancer is sometimes recommended, some doctors do not think it is necessarily a good thing because it may detect very small cancers that pose no risk to your health.

A raised level may mean you have prostate cancer. About 2 out of 3 men with a raised PSA level will not have prostate cancer. The higher the levels of PSA, the more likely it is to be a sign of cancer. The PSA test can also miss cancer.

However, other conditions which are not cancerous (for example, benign enlargement of the prostate, prostatitis, and urinary infection) can also cause higher PSA levels in the blood.

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

- an active urinary infection
- ejaculated within the last 48 hours
- exercised heavily within the last 48 hours
- had a prostate biopsy within the last 6 weeks

What if there is a family history of cancer?

- You may be asking for a test because a relative has had prostate cancer. Prostate cancer can run in families, but it is only if it is a close relative (e.g. father or brother), or, especially, two or more close relatives, that the increased risk is important. This is particularly so if they have developed the disease at a young age
- Although the chance of your having prostate cancer might be higher in these circumstances, it is still fairly small (10-15%)
- The higher the PSA value, the more likely cancer will be found. If your PSA is greater than 10 µg/l, the risk of finding prostate cancer is 50%
- Even if you have a family history of prostate cancer, all the information given above still applies to you and must be considered. There is no real evidence that men who are relatives of patients with prostate cancer benefit from being screened.

Who can I contact for more help or information?

Oncology Nurses

- Uro-Oncology Nurse Specialist
01223 586748
- Bladder cancer Nurse Practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy & BCG)
01223 274608
- Prostate cancer Nurse Practitioner
01223 274608

Non-Oncology Nurses

- Urology Nurse Practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)
01223 274608 or 586748

Patient Advice & Liaison Centre (PALS)

- Telephone
+44 (0)1223 216756 or 257257
+44 (0)1223 274432 or 274431
- PatientLine
*801 (*from patient bedside telephones only*)
- E mail
pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- Mail
PALS, Box No 53
Addenbrooke's Hospital
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

Chaplaincy and Multi-Faith Community

- Telephone
+44 (0)1223 217769
- E mail
derek.fraser@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- Mail
The Chaplaincy, Box No 105
Addenbrooke's Hospital
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

MINICOM System ("type" system for the hard of hearing)

- Telephone
+44 (0)1223 274604

Access Office (travel, parking & security information)

- Telephone
+44 (0)1223 586969

Other information

Should I have the PSA test?

The benefits of PSA testing

It may reassure you if the test result is normal

It may give you an indication of cancer before symptoms develop

It may find cancer at an early stage when treatments could be of benefit

If treatment is successful, the worst possible outcomes of more advanced cancer, including death, are avoided

Even if the cancer is more advanced and treatment is less successful, it will usually extend life.

The limitations of PSA testing

It can miss cancer and provide false reassurance

It may lead to unnecessary worry and medical tests when there is no cancer

It cannot tell the difference between slow-growing and fast-growing cancer

It may make you worry by finding slow-growing cancers that may never cause symptoms or shorten your life

48 men will undergo treatment in order to save one life.

This patient information leaflet provides input from specialists, the Cancer Research UK Primary Care Education Research Group, the University of Oxford & Professor Michael Kirby, visiting Professor to the Faculty of Health & Human Sciences at the University of Hertfordshire.

The following websites may help you decide whether the PSA tests is right for you:

<http://www.prosdex.com>

<http://cancerscreening.nhs.uk/prostate/index.html>

How can I get information in alternative formats?

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese 若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到：patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish Bu bilgiyi diğer dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya aşağıdaki adrese e-posta gönderin: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Bengali এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।



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Document history

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