

*Should I get screened
for prostate cancer?*

*What you should know
about the PSA test*



Canadian
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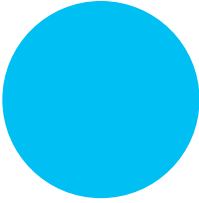
> What is PSA?

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is a protein produced by the prostate that helps keep semen in liquid form.

> What is the PSA test?

It is a simple blood test that your doctor can order. It measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen in the blood. A higher amount of PSA in the blood is a possible indicator of prostate cancer, although other conditions of the prostate can also increase PSA levels. Prostate cancer is not diagnosed followed by a PSA test alone, however, it will provide your healthcare provider with information to determine if further testing is needed. Only men have prostates and can be screened for prostate cancer with the PSA test.





> What is a 'normal' PSA number?

PSA numbers vary by age and race. It's normal to have a small amount of PSA in your blood, and the amount rises as you get older. Men are encouraged to get a baseline PSA test that can be used to compare against PSA change over time. Talk to your doctor about what your PSA number is and what that means for you.

A higher amount of PSA in the blood is a possible indicator of prostate cancer.



What you should know about the PSA test

> What does it mean if my PSA number is high?

An elevated PSA level can be a sign of a problem with your prostate. This could be: an enlarged prostate (Benign prostatic hyperplasia), inflammation or infection of the prostate called prostatitis, a urine infection, or prostate cancer. If you have had vigorous exercise or an ejaculation within the 48hrs before your PSA test, your PSA number may be temporarily high as a result.

> What happens if my PSA level is high?

Your doctor may conduct a repeat PSA test, and a digital rectal exam (DRE). Your doctor will then review your PSA score(s) and DRE combined with your age, race, lifestyle and family history to assess personal risk and determine next steps. This may include seeing a specialist for further testing, such as a biopsy, where a doctor will take samples of your prostate to test it for cancer.

It's important to remember that very few medical tests are perfect. Combining the PSA blood test with a DRE provides your doctor with more information and helps to increase accuracy of these early detection methods.

> If I choose to get a PSA test, how often do I need to get tested?

Your PSA number, as part of your risk profile (which includes your age, race, family history and lifestyle) will help your doctor determine when you'll have your next PSA test. Some men may need another PSA test in a few months while for others it may be several years. The key thing is that it's different for each man depending on your complete risk profile. Talk to your doctor about what's right for you.



The PSA Test

Advantages

- A PSA test can help detect prostate cancer before you have any symptoms.
- A PSA test may help to pick-up cancer at an early stage when there are more treatment options and a better chance of survival.
- Research has shown that a rapid rise in PSA levels may be a very strong sign of aggressive prostate cancer.
- The PSA number is an additional piece of information your doctor can use as part of your risk profile (which also includes age, race family history and lifestyle).

When deciding on whether to have a PSA test, talk to your doctor and consider all aspects of the testing process.



Disadvantages

- You might have an elevated PSA level, even if you don't have prostate cancer.
- An elevated PSA number may result in further testing and medical procedures which may cause anxiety and complications among some men.
- The PSA test can miss prostate cancer
- You might be diagnosed with a slow-growing prostate cancer which would never have caused you any problems or shortened your life. But being diagnosed with cancer could make you worry, and you might decide to have treatment that you didn't need.*

* To reduce unnecessary treatment for slow growing prostate cancer, an option known as 'active surveillance' is available to men so that they can monitor their cancer and respond appropriately.

For more information on the PSA test, the DRE and prostate cancer, visit cancer.ca/prostate.

Please note: the information presented in this resource is not meant to replace any medical advice provided by your healthcare team. For medical advice please consult with your healthcare provider.



Who gets prostate cancer?

There is no single cause of prostate cancer. However, there are some factors that make developing prostate cancer more likely.



Age: the chance of getting prostate cancer rises quickly after a man reaches age 50, and almost two out of three prostate cancers are found in men over 65¹. Age is the most important factor for prostate cancer.



Race: we don't know why, but black men are more likely to develop prostate cancer.



Family history: your risk of prostate cancer is increased if close family members have had the disease.



Weight: men who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of developing advanced prostate cancer.

It's still possible to develop prostate cancer even when none of these risk factors are present.

REFERENCE:

¹ Lin, K et al. (2008). Benefits and Harms of Prostate-Specific Antigen Screening for Prostate Cancer: An Evidence Update for the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 149(3):192-199.1.



ABOUT THE CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Canadian Cancer Society is the only national charity that supports Canadians with all cancers in communities across the country.

Please note: The information in this guide does not replace any medical advice given by your healthcare team. For medical advice, talk to your healthcare provider.

For more information, contact the Canadian Cancer Society.

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