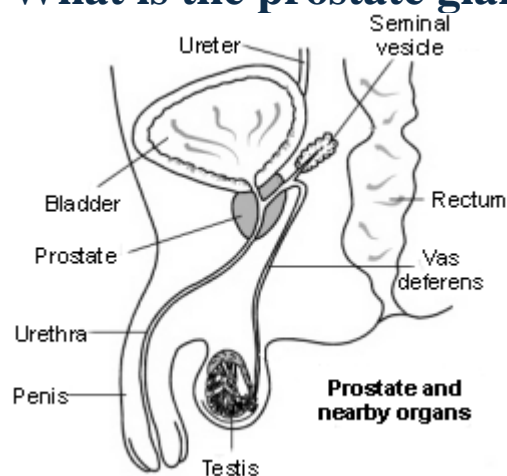


Can I have a test for Prostate Cancer?

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. A negative test does not mean that you definitely do not have prostate cancer, about 15 in every 100 men who have prostate cancer will have had a normal PSA level. Experts disagree on how useful the PSA test is. Your GP will probably want to see you, ask you questions about your symptoms and family history and examine your prostate (as this gives further useful information) after you have had the PSA blood test. There is a lot of ongoing research about PSA. At the moment there is no national screening programme for prostate cancer in the UK.

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. The GP can often discuss your symptoms with you and prescribe medication which will help reduce the impact of these on your life. Some men also develop prostate cancer.

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is a cancer which develops from cells in the prostate gland. It is the most common cancer in men in the UK. Each year, about 40,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer in the UK. It affects about 1 in 9 men in the UK at some point in their lives. 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). Not all prostate cancer needs treatment, sometimes regular monitoring is the best option, but other times hormonal treatment, radiotherapy or surgery may be the treatment.

What is a prostate specific antigen (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 bloodstream is measured in nanograms per millilitre (ng/mL).

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

- An active urine infection.
- Produced semen during sex or masturbation (ejaculated) in the previous 48 hours.
- Exercised heavily, including cycling, in the previous 48 hours.
- Had a prostate biopsy in the previous six weeks.
- Had an examination of the back passage with a gloved finger (a digital rectal examination) 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 to feel the prostate. This is to find out if the prostate is enlarged or feels abnormal in any way. The GP will usually do this **after** you have had the PSA blood test.

What is a normal result?

The normal range changes as you get older. The higher the level of prostate specific antigen (PSA), the more likely it is to be a sign of cancer

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

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

- Inability to pass urine, causing an enlarged bladder (acute retention of urine)
- Enlargement of the prostate that is non-cancerous (benign).
- Older age.
- Urine infection.
- Acute prostatitis (an infection of the prostate gland)
- Previous surgery to your prostate.
- If you have a tube (catheter) to help pass urine
- See advice on what you should not do before you have the PSA test.

What happens after a prostate specific antigen (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 GP will refer you to see a doctor who is a specialist for you to have further tests to find out if you have prostate cancer. The specialist will usually arrange for you to have a sample taken (a biopsy) of your prostate gland.

Should I have a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test?

Having the PSA test may sometimes cause you more harm than benefit. It is therefore very important to consider whether having the PSA test is right for you. See also separate leaflets called PSA Testing for Prostate Cancer and Prostate Cancer.

Benefits and risks of having or not having a PSA test.

Frequently asked questions	Having a PSA test	Not having a PSA test
How does having a PSA test affect my chance of being diagnosed with prostate cancer?	<p>Having the PSA test increases the chance of prostate cancer being diagnosed. Between 6 and 7 men in every 100 who have a PSA test are diagnosed with cancer.</p> <p>The PSA test finds many cancers that would not cause any health problems if they remained undiagnosed and untreated. Therefore having the test may cause unnecessary worry as well as unnecessary investigations and treatment.</p>	<p>Between 4 and 5 men in every 100 who don't have a PSA test are diagnosed with prostate cancer at some time in the future. Not having a PSA test will mean you do not have any unnecessary worry, investigations or treatment.</p>
What is the effect of having a PSA test on prostate cancer being diagnosed earlier?	<p>Prostate cancer is diagnosed on average between 6 and 8 years earlier in men who have a PSA test than those who don't have the test.</p>	<p>It is not known whether early diagnosis and treatment makes any difference to how long you are likely to live if you do have prostate cancer.</p>
What is the effect of having a PSA test on dying from prostate cancer?	<p>Men who have prostate cancer are less likely to die of prostate cancer if they have a PSA test. Having a PSA test prevents 1 death from prostate cancer for every 1,000 men who have the test.</p> <p>The risk of dying from prostate cancer over the next ten years is between 4 and 5 in 1,000 for men who have the PSA test.</p>	<p>The risk of dying from prostate cancer over the next ten years is 5 in 1,000 for men who do not have the PSA test. The risk of dying from prostate cancer is (at best) 1 in 1,000 less if you have the PSA test than if you don't have the test.</p>
What is the effect of having a PSA test on how long you live?	<p>Studies have shown that men who have the PSA test do not on average live longer or shorter lives than men who do not have the PSA test.</p>	<p>Studies have shown that men who do not have the PSA test do not on average live longer or shorter lives than men who have the PSA test.</p>
What is the harm of a positive PSA test result?	<p>If you have a positive PSA test result (a high PSA level) you will be referred to a specialist for further investigations and possibly for treatment of prostate cancer.</p>	<p>If you do not have the test you will not then be referred to a specialist for further investigations and possibly for treatment of prostate cancer.</p>

	<p>Investigations: about 70 men in every 100 with a raised PSA level will have a biopsy of the prostate. A biopsy of the prostate can cause pain, bleeding and urine infections.</p> <p>Treatment: problems with treatment for prostate cancer include incontinence of urine and difficulty getting an erection. There may also be complications caused by having an operation or radiotherapy for the prostate cancer.</p>	
<p>What is the risk of a positive result being wrong (called a false positive result)? A false positive result is when the test indicates you do have prostate cancer but you do not have prostate cancer.</p>	<p>About 70 men in every 100 with a raised PSA result do not have prostate cancer.</p>	<p>Not having a PSA test may avoid the unnecessary anxiety of having an abnormal result when you don't actually have prostate cancer.</p>
<p>What is the risk of a negative result being wrong (called a false negative result)? A false negative result is when the test indicates you do not have prostate cancer but you do have prostate cancer.</p>	<p>About 15 in every 100 men who have a normal PSA level do have prostate cancer.</p>	<p>Not having a PSA test may avoid false reassurance when a false negative result wrongly indicates that you do not have prostate cancer.</p>

If after reading this information you want to proceed with testing or have further questions you would like to discuss with a GP please book a non – urgent telephone consultation at the practice