

Testing for Prostate Cancer



“Should I
be tested?
Is it the
right choice
for me?”

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Prostate cancer affects many men. There are tests to find it early.

Should I be tested for prostate cancer?

There may be benefits and risks with testing. Research has not yet proven that the benefits of testing outweigh the risks.

This booklet will help you decide if you want to be tested for prostate cancer.

Is testing the right choice for me?

Right now you might not know if you want to be tested. After reading this booklet, we hope that you will be able to talk with your doctor and tell him how you feel about testing. Here we will talk more about prostate cancer testing and the possible benefits and harms of testing.

What if I am having prostate symptoms now?

If you have pain when you pass your urine, blood in your urine, or trouble passing urine, you should talk with your doctor now. These are often symptoms of other prostate problems, but they can also be caused by prostate cancer. The only way to know what is wrong is to see your doctor.

This booklet is to help men who do not have any prostate symptoms decide if they want to be tested.

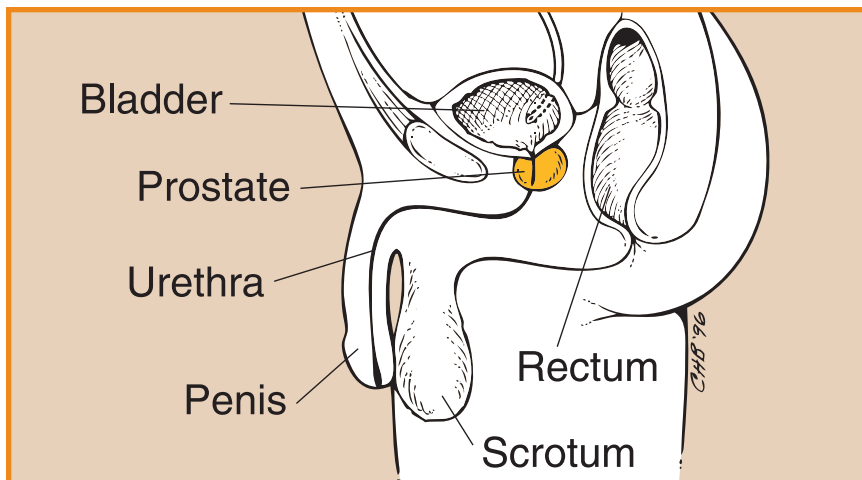
If you have blood in your urine or problems with passing urine, please talk with your doctor right away.



Does the American Cancer Society say that all men should be tested for prostate cancer?

No, we do not. The research that has been done is not clear. Some research shows that finding prostate cancer early will stop some men from dying from the disease. Other research does not show this. And treating prostate cancer can have some serious side effects.

The American Cancer Society says that men should make an informed decision. This means that you should learn about prostate cancer and testing. You should think through the risks and possible benefits. Then after talking with your doctor, you should decide if testing is the right choice for you.



About prostate cancer

What is prostate cancer?

Cancer begins in your body when normal cells start to grow out of control. In prostate cancer, prostate cells grow out of control. They can spread and affect nearby organs. They can also spread to distant parts of the body and cause problems.

How common is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. The chance of having prostate cancer goes up with age.

Are all prostate cancers the same?

Prostate cancer can cause death. But not all prostate cancers are the same. Many prostate cancers grow slowly. These do not cause any harm. Some prostate cancers grow fast. They spread to other parts of the body where they cause problems and can even cause death.

What causes prostate cancer?

We do not know what causes this cancer. We do know that certain things cause some men to have a higher chance of having prostate cancer than others. Some of these are age, family history, and race. We call these “risk factors” because they increase your risk of having prostate cancer.

- **Age:** Your age is the strongest factor. The chance of having prostate cancer goes up quickly after age 50. About 2/3 (66%) of prostate cancers occur in men over the age of 65.
- **Family history:** Men with a father or brother who had prostate cancer are more likely to get prostate cancer, too. This is even more likely if the father or brother had the cancer before age 65.
- **Race:** We do not know why, but prostate cancer is more common in African American men than in other races.

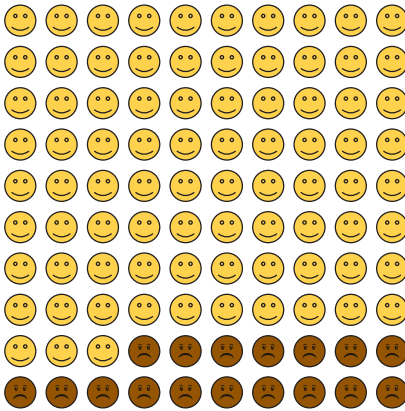
As you get older, your chance of having prostate cancer goes up. You might also hear it this way – As you get older, your risk for prostate cancer increases.





What are my chances of having prostate cancer?

Based on the way prostate cancer testing is done today, about 17 out of 100 of men (17%) who are now age 50 will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their life.

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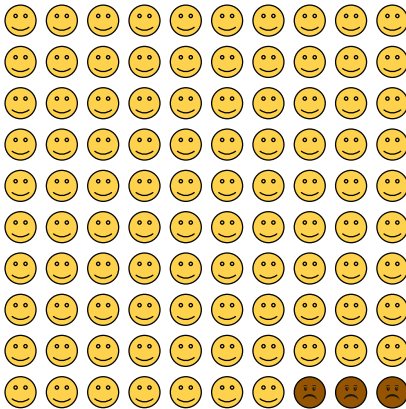




 = man **not diagnosed** with prostate cancer
 = man **with** prostate cancer

17 out of 100 men (17%) age 50 will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their life, and 3 out of 100 men (3%) will die of prostate cancer.

About 3 out of 100 men (3%) who are age 50 will die of prostate cancer.

3 out of 100 men (3%) age 50 will some day die of prostate cancer.



-  = man who **does not die** from prostate cancer
-  = man who **dies** from prostate cancer

Prostate cancer testing

A PSA blood test and rectal exam can tell your doctor about your prostate. Your doctor might do a PSA blood test alone, or he might do both tests.

What is a PSA test?

PSA stands for prostate-specific antigen. It is a protein made by the prostate gland. The PSA test measures how much of this protein is in your blood. It is done by having a small amount of blood taken from a vein in your arm.

What is a rectal exam?

With this test, your doctor puts a gloved, lubricated finger into your rectum to feel your prostate gland. A rectal exam can tell if the prostate size, shape, and texture are normal.

Can testing tell me for certain that I have prostate cancer?

No. There is no perfect test to look for prostate cancer.

- **Rectal exam:** Most cancers cannot be felt by rectal exam. But sometimes rectal exams can find cancer even when the PSA level does not suggest cancer.
- **PSA test:** There is no PSA level that says for sure that prostate cancer is present. Your chance of having prostate cancer goes up as your PSA level goes up.

PSA levels can be high in prostate cancer, and also with prostate infections and other prostate problems. So, having a high PSA level does NOT always mean that you have prostate cancer.

If your PSA level is high, you will need other tests to find out why.



Can testing tell me for certain that I do not have prostate cancer?

No. If your PSA level is low, you can still have prostate cancer. If your rectal exam does not suggest cancer, you can still have prostate cancer.

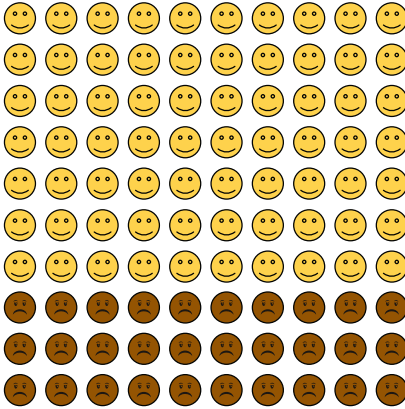
The rectal exam is not as good as the PSA test for finding prostate cancer, but it might find cancers in some men with low PSA levels.


These tests are not perfect tests for finding prostate cancer.


What is my chance of having prostate cancer based on my PSA level?

If the PSA level is 4 or higher

**Biopsy will find prostate cancer in
30 out of 100 men (30%).**

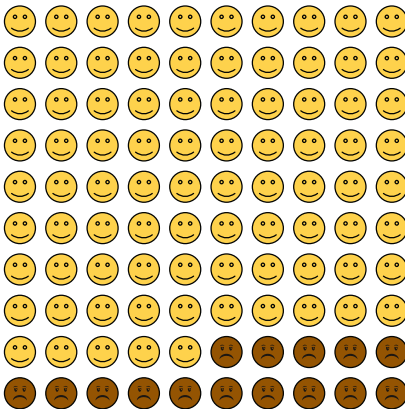



 = man **with no** prostate cancer on biopsy


 = man **with** prostate cancer on biopsy

If the PSA level is below 4

**Biopsy will find prostate cancer in
15 out of 100 men (15%).**



 = man **with no** prostate cancer on biopsy

 = man **with** prostate cancer on biopsy



So, how do I find out if I have prostate cancer?

If your PSA level or your rectal exam suggests cancer, you may need a biopsy of your prostate gland.

- A biopsy is done with a needle.
- Many tiny pieces of the prostate gland are removed with a biopsy.
- These tiny pieces are looked at under a microscope to look for cancer cells.
- The biopsy is done as an outpatient and takes only a few minutes.

If I get tested

What will happen?

- You go to your doctor and get a PSA test and maybe a rectal exam.
- If your test results are cause for concern, you have a biopsy.

Possible benefits to you

- Testing may find an early prostate cancer – while it is small and before it has spread.
- If it is found early, there is a better chance of being treated and cured.
- Getting tested may give you peace of mind.

Risks to you

- Testing may lead to worry about the results.
- Testing may find a cancer that might never have caused problems or caused death.
- Testing may lead to side effects from treatment. These include problems controlling your urine, problems with your bowels, and/or problems having sex.
- Your PSA level may be low, even though cancer is there.

If I do not get tested

What will happen?

- You have regular check-ups but no prostate cancer testing.
- At any time, you can change your mind and be tested.

Possible benefits to you

- You avoid the worry that you might have from testing.
- You avoid being treated for a cancer that might never cause you any problems.
- You avoid the side effects that can occur with treatment. These include problems passing your urine, problems with your bowels, and/or problems having sex.

Risks to you

- You may have an early prostate cancer, and you won't know this.
- You may have a prostate cancer that may later cause symptoms or shorten your life and not have the chance to find it early.

How do I decide if testing is the right choice for me?

Know the facts about:

- Prostate cancer and other prostate problems
- What the PSA test and rectal exam can and cannot tell you
- What other decisions you may need to make if you are tested

Ask questions and talk to others:

- Write down your questions and discuss them with your doctor.
- Talk about testing with your family and those who care about you.

Use the balance scale on the next two pages

- To help you weigh how you feel about testing
- To help you make your decision about testing

What is important to you?

There are many reasons men decide to be tested or to not be tested for prostate cancer. Some reasons are listed below. Place a check by the reasons that are important to you.



Some reasons to be tested

Check what's important to you



I will have peace of mind when I know the test results.

I will know if I have prostate cancer or not.

I will have a better chance of getting cancer treatment if a cancer is found early.

Other reasons important to you (list them here):

over



Cut out and take to your doctor.

What is important to you?

Some reasons **not** to be tested

Check what's important to you



I will worry about the test results.

I might find a prostate cancer that never would have caused me problems or shortened my life.

I will have to deal with treatment and its side effects.

Other reasons important to you (list them here):

Which way are you leaning about being tested?

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Want to
be tested

Not
sure

Do not
want to be
tested



So, what does the American Cancer Society recommend for me?

Starting at age 50, talk to your doctor about the pros and cons of testing. Then decide if testing is the right choice for you.

If you are African American or have a father or brother who had prostate cancer before age 65, have this talk with your doctor starting at age 45.

This talk should take place at age 40 for men at even higher risk – those with 2 or more close relatives who had prostate cancer at an early age.

If you decide to be tested, you should have the PSA blood test with or without a rectal exam. How often you are tested will depend on your PSA level.

The decision is yours.

**For cancer information, answers, and support,
call your American Cancer Society 24 hours
a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-227-2345.**



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