



Information for men considering a PSA test

What is known about prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is now the most frequent cancer diagnosis in men, surpassing lung cancer in many countries. It is rare in men below the age of 50 years and the average age of diagnosis is 75 years.

One reason for higher prostate cancer rates are more sophisticated diagnostic tools that may detect cancer at an earlier stage. Longer life expectancy is another reason since cancer risk increases with advanced age.

The prostate gland lies below the bladder. Prostate cancer tends to grow slowly and it may take decades before it causes symptoms. Slow growing prostate cancers are common and may not cause symptoms or shorten life.

What can you do?

In addition to regular digital rectal examination, your doctor/urologist may recommend a PSA test.

What is a PSA test?

The PSA test is a blood test that measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen in the blood, a protein produced only by the cells of the prostate gland.

A raised PSA level can be an early indication of prostate cancer. However, other non-cancerous conditions such as benign prostatic hyperplasia, the enlargement of the prostate gland, as well as an inflammation of the prostate (prostatitis) can also result in elevated PSA levels. Approximately 2 out of 3 men with a raised PSA level will not have prostate cancer.

Additional tests such as the volume of the prostate, transrectal ultrasound and more specific forms of PSA (free PSA, complexed PSA) or the PSA trend over time may be helpful.

Benefits of PSA testing

- ❖ The test is the most sensitive method to suspect prostate cancer.
- ❖ It may provide reassurance if the test result is normal (i.e. true negative).
- ❖ It may result in earlier detection of prostate cancer before symptoms appear and may lead to a successful and curative treatment.
- ❖ If treatment is successful, the consequences of more advanced cancer can be avoided.

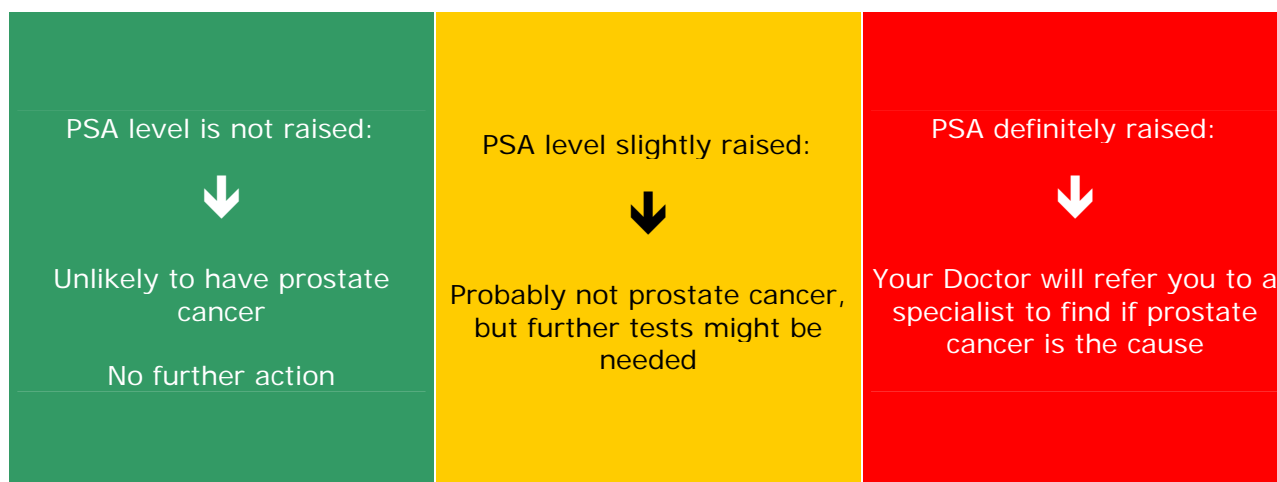
Disadvantages of PSA testing

- ❖ It may not detect prostate cancer and therefore provide false reassurance (i.e. false negative).
- ❖ It may lead to unnecessary anxiety and medical tests when no cancer is present.
- ❖ It might detect slow-growing cancers that may never cause symptoms or shortened life expectancy.
- ❖ All cancer treatments have significant side-effects, and there is no absolute certainty that they will be successful.

We do not recommend the use of over-the-counter, so called "Dip-Stick PSA Tests". These tests have the disadvantage of not measuring the exact PSA level and too often give the wrong results. This is especially true in the concentration range important for early detection of prostate cancer, e.g. only slightly increased PSA levels are often not recognised by dip-stick tests and PSA elevations may not be verified by conventional PSA detection methods. In addition, it is not possible to evaluate the PSA trend over time, i.e. to determine an increasing or decreasing PSA course.

What happens after a PSA test?

Simply, there are three main options after the PSA test:



Together, you and your Doctor will decide whether PSA testing is right for you.

Although PSA levels alone do not provide sufficient information to distinguish between benign prostate conditions and prostate cancer, your urologist will take the result of this test into account in deciding whether to recommend prostate biopsy. Interpreting PSA values requires experience and knowledge of a professional. Do not interpret values on your own and make sure your physician is up to date with recent information on PSA.

The PSA test is not able to diagnose prostate cancer. To confirm the presence of prostate cancer a biopsy of the prostate is necessary.