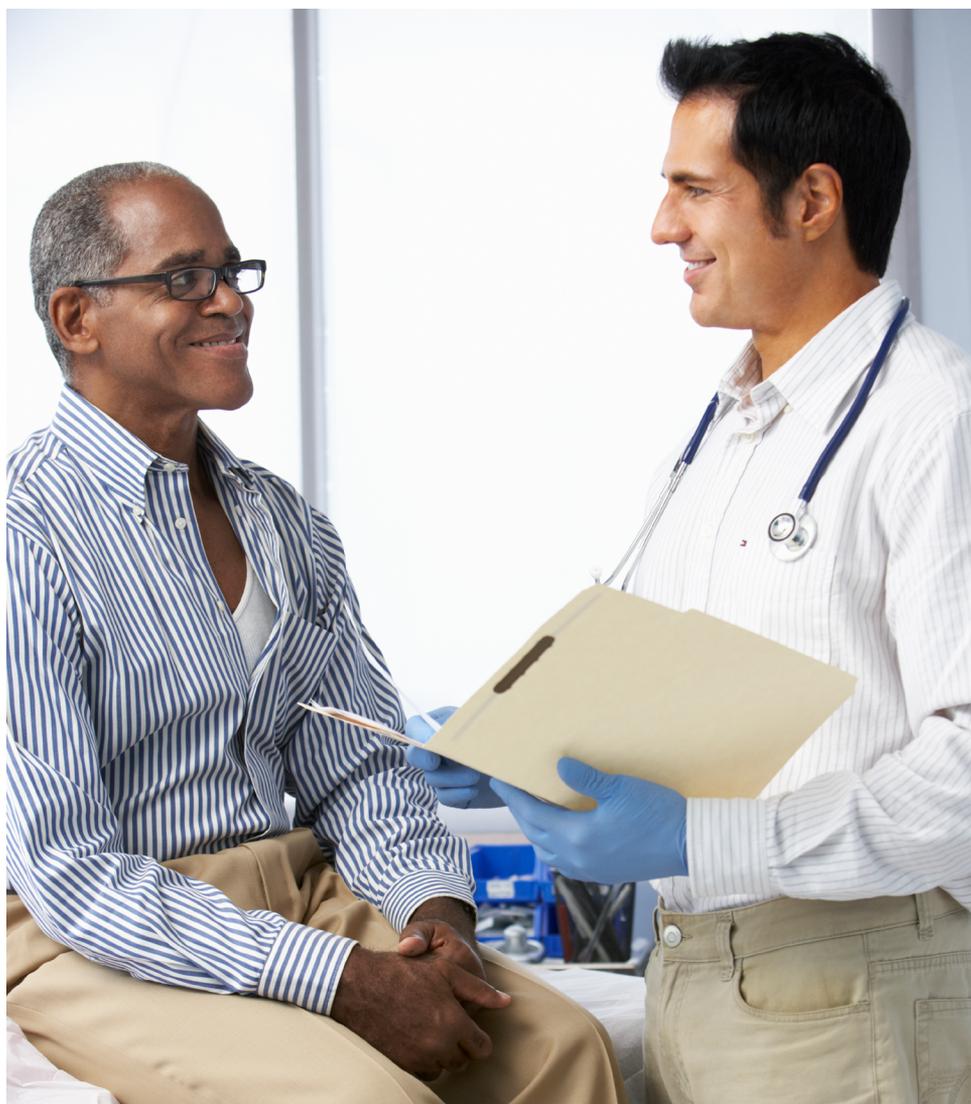


Testing for Prostate Cancer



Who this booklet is for:

This booklet includes information to help men understand testing for prostate cancer so they can decide with their doctor if testing is right for them.

About prostate cancer

What is prostate cancer?

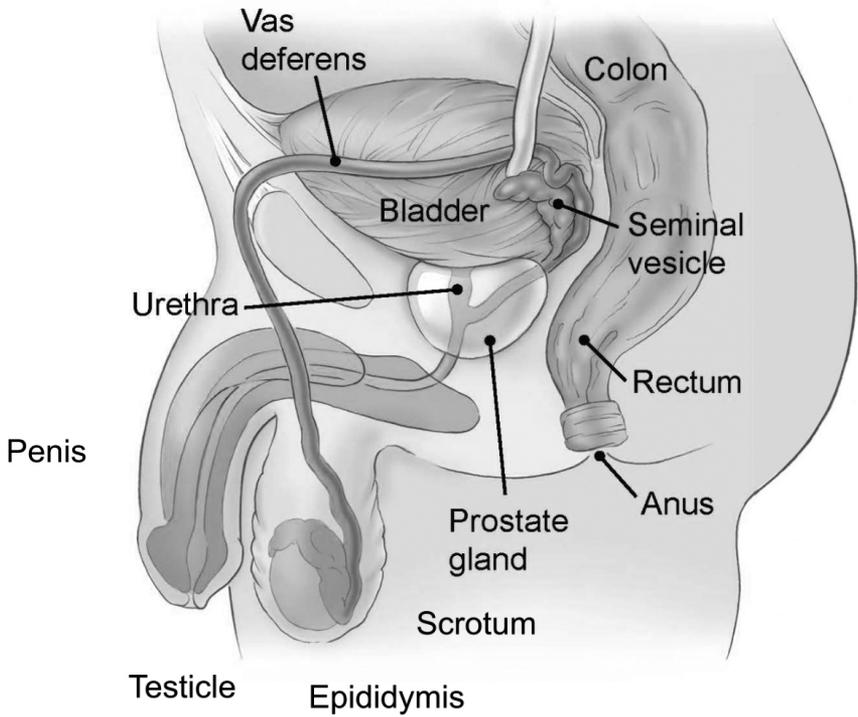
Cancer begins in your body when normal cells start to grow out of control. In prostate cancer, prostate cells grow out of control. They can spread and affect nearby organs, and can also spread to distant parts of the body.

Are all prostate cancers the same?

No, they are not. Some prostate cancers grow and spread quickly, but most grow slowly.

What causes prostate cancer?

The exact cause of prostate cancer is not known. But certain risk factors can make some men have a higher chance of having prostate cancer than others. Having a risk factor, or even several, does not mean that you will get prostate cancer. And some people who get prostate cancer may not have any known risk factors.



- **Age:** The chance of having prostate cancer goes up after age 50.
- **Family history:** Men with a father or brother who had prostate cancer are more likely to get prostate cancer. The risk is higher for men who have several relatives with prostate cancer, especially if their relatives were young when the cancer was found.
- **Race/ethnicity:** Prostate cancer is more common in African-American men and in Caribbean men of African ancestry than in men of other races.

What if I am having prostate symptoms now?

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any prostate symptoms. Early prostate cancer usually has no symptoms. More advanced prostate cancers can sometimes cause symptoms like:

- Problems urinating
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Trouble getting an erection
- Pain in the hips, back (spine), or chest (ribs)
- Weakness or numbness in the legs or feet
- Loss of bladder or bowel control.

Prostate cancer testing

Talk to your health care provider about the pros and cons of having prostate cancer testing. A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and digital rectal exam (DRE) are the 2 tests that might be done. Your doctor might do a PSA blood test alone, or he might do both tests. These tests look for possible signs of prostate cancer. But these tests can't tell for sure if you have cancer. If the results of one of these tests is abnormal, you'll probably need a prostate biopsy to know for sure if you have prostate cancer.

What is a PSA test?

This is a test that measures how much PSA is in your blood. PSA stands for prostate-specific antigen, a protein made by the prostate gland.

What is a digital rectal exam (DRE)?

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.

Prostate biopsy

If your PSA level or DRE suggests prostate cancer, you may need a prostate biopsy to know for sure.

- A biopsy is done with a needle. The needle is put into the prostate gland.
- Tiny pieces of the prostate gland are removed with the needle.
- These tiny pieces are looked at under a microscope to see if cancer cells are present.

If the biopsy shows cancer cells, you and your doctor will decide if treatment is needed and how to treat the cancer.

Does the American Cancer Society recommend testing for prostate cancer?

- **The research is not clear.** Some research shows that finding prostate cancer early will help stop some men from dying from the disease. Other research does not show this.
- **All prostate cancers are not the same.** Many prostate cancers grow slowly. These usually do not cause harm. Some prostate cancers grow fast. They can spread to other parts of the body. They cause problems and can even cause death.

The PSA and DRE tests often cannot tell us which prostate cancers will cause harm and which ones will not. This means men with slow-growing cancers might get treatment that they don't need.

- **Testing is not perfect.** The test results can sometimes suggest a man has cancer even when he doesn't. The tests can also miss a prostate cancer, and a man might think that he did not have prostate cancer when he did.
- **Treatment can have serious side effects.** For men who have prostate cancer, treatment can have some serious side effects. These side effects can include problems controlling your urine, problems with your bowels, and/or problems having sex.

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

The American Cancer Society recommends that men have a chance to make an informed decision with their health care provider about whether to be screened for prostate cancer. The decision should be made after getting information about the risks and potential benefits of prostate cancer screening. Men should not be screened unless they have received this information. The discussion about screening should take place at:

- **Age 50 for men who are at average risk** of prostate cancer and are expected to live at least 10 more years.

- **Age 45 for men at high risk** of developing prostate cancer. This includes African Americans, Caribbean men of African ancestry, and men who have a first-degree relative (father or brother) diagnosed with prostate cancer at an early age (younger than age 65).
- **Age 40 for men at even higher risk** (those with more than one first-degree relative who had prostate cancer at an early age)

Men who decide to be screened should get the PSA blood test. The DRE may also be done as a part of screening. How often you are tested will depend on your PSA level, general health, preferences, and values.

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

Know the facts. Talk to your health care provider.

- Know about prostate cancer and other prostate problems.
- Know what the PSA test and rectal exam can and cannot tell you.
- Know what other decisions you may need to make if you are tested.

Ask questions, and talk to others.

- If you have questions, discuss them with your doctor.
- Tell your family and those who care about you you're thinking about getting tested.



You need to know...

- Prostate cancer affects many men.
- There are tests that can help find it early.
- We don't yet know if the benefits of testing outweigh the risks.
- Men should learn about prostate cancer and testing, talk to their health care providers, then decide if testing is the right choice for them.

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and emotional support, visit the American Cancer Society website at www.cancer.org or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

