

PSA Screening Patient Information

What is PSA?

Prostate specific antigen (PSA) is a protein made by prostate cells that can be measured in your blood to help detect early prostate cancer. PSA is not specific to prostate cancer and can be elevated due to other less serious conditions such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostate inflammation.

Should I ask my doctor for a PSA test?

Traditional screening methods, such as yearly PSA level, for prostate cancer have been unreliable. In 2012, the United States Preventive Services Task Force recommended against PSA based screening for prostate cancer because the potential harms caused by a positive test did not outweigh the benefits. Modern screening strategies are constantly changing, so it is important to understand your risk for prostate cancer to discuss screening with your doctor. Risk factors include:

- Older age: Risk increases as you get older and a midlife PSA can predict future prostate cancer
- African descent: Black men have the greatest risk for prostate cancer and it is more likely to be aggressive or advanced.
- Family History: Having a father, brother, or son who had prostate cancer may increase your risk. Also, a strong family history of breast cancer or genes that increase the risk of breast cancer (BRCA1/BRCA2) may increase your risk of prostate cancer.

How is Prostate Cancer screening currently done?

Currently, screening recommendations are controversial and constantly changing so it is important to talk to your doctor. Some new research has suggested a single PSA blood test at 40 years old to determine PSA levels and this level can help determine future screening plans. If you are experiencing urinary symptoms, it is best to tell your doctor so screening can be done if needed

What is a normal PSA level?

There is no specific normal or abnormal level when measuring PSA. Previously, levels of 4 ng/mL or lower were considered normal, but other problems can cause elevated PSA levels. In general, high PSA levels or continuous rise may be early signs of prostate cancer requiring further testing such as prostate biopsy or more blood work to check free PSA levels.

Can I reduce my risk for Prostate Cancer?

Risk factors such as age, race, and family history cannot be changed, but scientific evidence suggests that intensive lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise, may affect the progression of prostate cancer and lower PSA levels. Research has shown that countries with a "Western" diet have a higher rate of prostate cancer, but we do not know what causes this. Suggestions for dietary changes are 9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Along with dietary changes, 45 minutes of exercise 3 times per week can help with weight loss, which may be another factor that increases prostate cancer risk.

<https://www.cancer.gov/types/prostate/psa-fact-sheet>

<https://www.auanet.org/education/guidelines/prostate-cancer-detection.cfm>

<https://www.auanet.org/education/prostate-cancer-psa.cfm>

Improved nutrition may reduce the incidence of prostate cancer & also reduce the risk of prostate cancer progression. J Urol. 2005 Sep;174(3):1065-9