



# Should you get a PSA test?

## A Patient–Doctor Decision

**Getting a PSA routinely may help identify aggressive cancers.** If you have cancer, a routine PSA can help tell whether the cancer is growing fast. Catching a prostate cancer early may make it easier to treat. If the cancer spreads outside of the prostate there are less treatment options. **The PSA test helps to find prostate cancers earlier than they would have been found without the PSA.**

**The PSA is a blood test used to help identify men who *may* have prostate cancer.** PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) is a substance from the prostate; the PSA blood test tells how much PSA is in your blood. All men have PSA in the blood, but a **high PSA level may be a sign of prostate problems** (such as an enlarged prostate). Older age may also cause a higher PSA level. Prostate cancer is another cause of a high PSA. Therefore a **high PSA *may* or *may not* be a sign of cancer.**

What is a PSA?

Why shouldn't I get a PSA?

Why should I get a PSA?

Prostate cancer usually grows very slowly. Even if a man has prostate cancer it may never affect his health. **Most men with prostate cancer die of other causes.** Many men never even know they have prostate cancer. They die from other causes before the prostate cancer grows enough to cause health problems. Treatment for prostate cancer may result in bad side effects. **A man who has prostate cancer may be worse off if he gets treated than if he did not get treatment.** The side effects from the treatment may cause harm when the cancer may not have. Some men think the treatment side effects are worse than having the cancer.

Why can't my doctor decide what's best for me?

What should I do?

**Whether or not you should get a PSA depends on how *you* balance the pros and cons.** Would you feel better knowing you have prostate cancer? Would you feel better not knowing? **Some things to think about: What happens if your PSA is elevated? What happens if you do have cancer? What difference will it make for you to know?**

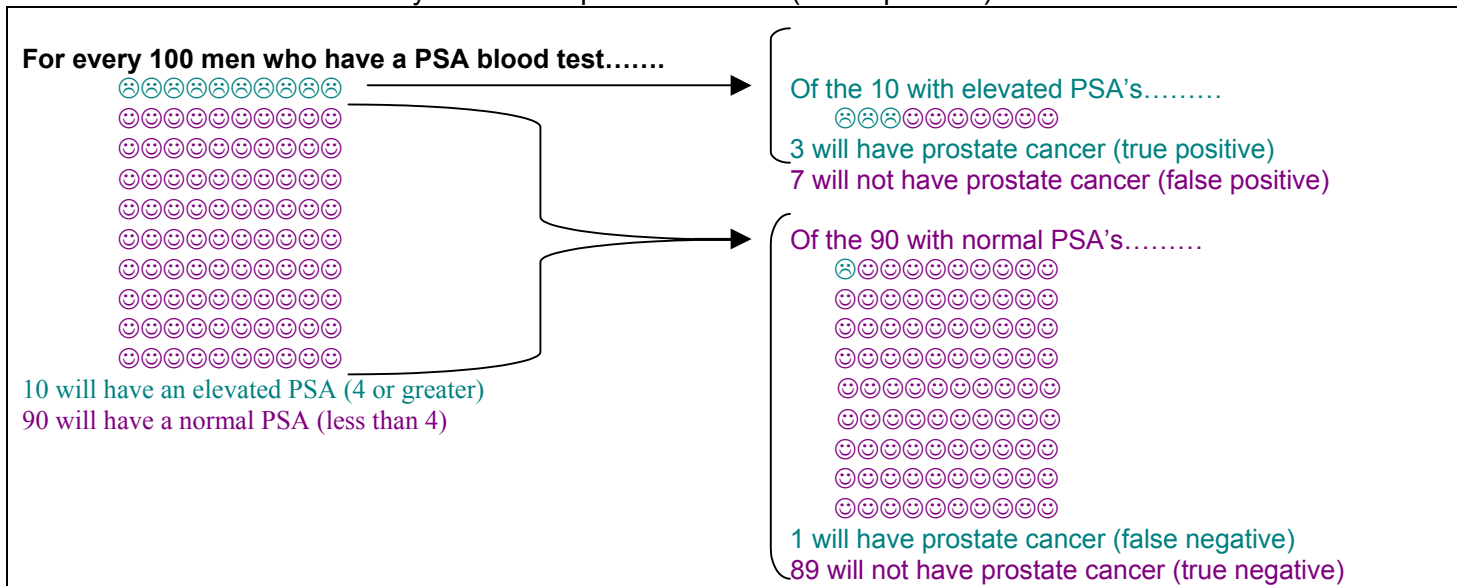
Talk to your doctor about your individual risks for prostate cancer. Ask your doctor any questions you have about the PSA and prostate cancer. By talking to your doctor, you and he can make a shared decision about whether you should get a PSA.

If I do get a PSA what happens next?

**A high PSA is 4 or greater. If you have a high PSA the next step is a biopsy. If the biopsy shows you have cancer then you will need to decide what treatment is best for you.**

**There are 4 possible outcomes to a PSA test:**

1. Your PSA is normal and you *do not* have prostate cancer (a true negative)
2. Your PSA is normal but you *do* have prostate cancer (a false negative)
3. Your PSA is elevated but you *do not* have prostate cancer (a false positive)
4. Your PSA is elevated and you *do* have prostate cancer (a true positive)



**If you have prostate cancer you must make a tough decision of whether or not to treat it. Most treatments can have bad side effects. It is not known whether treatment or no treatment results in better quality of life. It is not known whether treatment prolongs life. Here are some of the things that can happen after treatment:**

Possible Outcomes of Treatment

	Radiation	Surgery
Improved survival	Unknown	Unknown
Death from treatment	2 in 1000	1 in 200 younger men 1 to 3 in 100 older men
Impotence ( <i>difficulty with erection</i> )	40 in 100	30* to 90 in 100 *nerve sparing surgery
Any Incontinence ( <i>loss of urine control</i> )	60 in 100	32 in 100
Complete Incontinence ( <i>lose complete control of urine</i> )	1 in 100	7 in 100
Urinary Stricture ( <i>makes it difficult to urinate</i> )	5 in 100	12-20 in 100
Any rectal Injury ( <i>discomfort/trouble with bowel movements</i> )	11 in 100	30 in 100

**It is up to you and your doctor to decide whether you should have a PSA. The correct decision is the informed decision. Talk to your doctor and decide what factors are important to you. Here are some Pros and Cons to consider:**

Possible advantages to having a PSA test:	Possible disadvantages to having a PSA test:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may give reassurance if it's normal</li> <li>• It can find many cancers earlier than is possible by a digital rectal exam</li> <li>• Treatment at early stages <i>may</i> help men live longer and avoid cancer complications</li> </ul>	<p>It may miss cancer and give a false reassurance that there is no cancer</p> <p>It may lead to a biopsy and anxiety when a man has no cancer</p> <p>Treatment at early stages <i>may not</i> help men live longer and treatment has risks of side effects</p>

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