

Should I Have a PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) Test?

This decision aid is for people considering a PSA test. The information is based on research from Europe on people ages 55 to 69. This tool should not be used by people with prostate symptoms.

PATIENT QUESTIONS			
What does the test involve?	A small amount of blood will be taken from a vein. It will be checked to see if the level of PSA is normal or high. A high level means that prostate cancer is more likely.		
Does a high PSA level always mean I have prostate cancer?	No, PSA levels can be high for many reasons, including age, enlarged prostate, or infection. If your PSA level is high, you will likely have a sample taken from your prostate (a biopsy). The sample will be checked for signs of cancer.		
Does a normal PSA test mean I do not have cancer?	No, it is still possible to have cancer. About 150 of 1,000 people (15%) with a normal PSA level will have prostate cancer. Most of these cancers will not be found and will not cause problems.		
How many people will have prostate cancer found?	<p>About 87 of 1,000 of these people (9%) will have prostate cancer found by 16 years whether they have the test or not.</p> <p>With a PSA Test, an additional 29 of 1,000 people (3%) find a cancer that will never cause problems. This may lead to unnecessary treatment which can cause problems with erections and leaking pee.</p>		
How many people will die from prostate cancer?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><i>People who have the test:</i> About 7 of 1,000 of these people (0.7%) will die from prostate cancer by 16 years.</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><i>People who don't have the test:</i> About 9 of 1,000 of these people (0.9%) will die from prostate cancer by 16 years.</td> </tr> </table>	<i>People who have the test:</i> About 7 of 1,000 of these people (0.7%) will die from prostate cancer by 16 years.	<i>People who don't have the test:</i> About 9 of 1,000 of these people (0.9%) will die from prostate cancer by 16 years.
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For people who get the PSA test, what are the risks?	<p>There are no risks from the blood test itself. If your PSA test result is high, you may need a prostate biopsy, which has risks.</p> <p>About 208 of 1,000 people (21%) who have a PSA test will get a biopsy.</p>		
For people who get a prostate biopsy, what are the risks?	<p>Of these 208 people who get a prostate biopsy, about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92 (44%) get a normal result, meaning the PSA result was a false alarm • 15 (7%) get an infection that needs treatment • 6 (3%) have serious bleeding 		

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