

PSA Testing for Prostate Cancer: FAQs for Patients

What is a PSA test?

A **PSA** (prostate-specific antigen) blood test is often used to screen men for prostate cancer, either with or without a digital rectal exam. The purpose is to measure the amount of PSA in the blood. If the PSA level is elevated, it could potentially have a big impact on a man's life, which is why you should have all of the facts before making the decision to undergo PSA testing.

What do PSA test levels mean?

Low or Normal PSA Levels: Most PSA tests come back normal. The lower the PSA level, the lower the risk of prostate cancer. However, a normal PSA level does not completely eliminate the possibility of having prostate cancer. There is no level of PSA that *guarantees* a man does not have prostate cancer.

Elevated PSA Levels: Elevated PSA levels are suspicious and could indicate prostate cancer. However, the PSA could also be elevated for reasons other than prostate cancer. Generally, the higher the PSA level, the greater the concern that there might be cancer. A continuous rise in PSA levels over time may also be an indication of prostate cancer.

What are the benefits and risks of PSA testing?

Benefits

- ▶ Testing may lead to the identification and treatment of prostate cancer in its earlier stages, when treatment is more effective.
- ▶ Testing is done through a simple and widely available blood test.
- ▶ Testing availability has reduced the number of deaths from prostate cancer.

Risks

- ▶ Elevated PSA levels may lead to invasive tests, procedures and treatments that ultimately turn out to be unnecessary since some prostate cancers detected would never have caused a problem during a man's lifetime.
- ▶ Potential "false positives." This means the PSA level is high enough to raise suspicion of prostate cancer, but ultimately prostate cancer may not be diagnosed.
- ▶ A biopsy may be recommended for suspicious PSA results. A biopsy involves removing a small amount of tissue from the prostate and testing it for cancer. Biopsies are generally safe but could cause side effects, which in cases where the PSA was a "false positive" could have been avoided.

[See Reverse](#)



What are my options if my PSA level is elevated?

Re-Check PSA Levels: The repeated PSA test could come back with lower, identical or higher PSA levels. If it comes back lower, that is a good sign but your doctor may recommend that you have it checked again to see if it remains low.

Undergo a Biopsy: After reviewing your risk factors for prostate cancer as well as your PSA level(s), your physician may recommend that you have a biopsy. If the results of your biopsy are negative, talk to your doctor about how often you should be tested for prostate cancer. If it comes back positive for prostate cancer, there are several treatment options available which your doctor will discuss with you in detail.

If you have additional questions or concerns about your options, please discuss them with your doctor or nurse.

How can I find out about upcoming prostate cancer screenings?

Men who meet certain criteria are eligible to register for a Northside Hospital prostate cancer screening.

- › Men ages 45-75
- › Men who have never been diagnosed with prostate cancer
- › Men who have not had a prostate screening exam within the last year

For information about upcoming screenings, please visit northside.com/prostate-cancer-screenings or call **404-531-4444**.

Track Your PSA Levels

Instructions

1. Use the table below to record your PSA levels
2. See a urologist if your PSA has risen when compared to prior PSA results
3. Share these results with your physician or healthcare provider.

Date	PSA Level

Date	PSA Level



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