

A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test is a blood test that can help detect prostate cancer by measuring the levels of the protein PSA in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by normal cells in the prostate, but can also be produced by cancer cells. It is normal to have small amounts of PSA in your blood and your PSA level will also naturally increase with age. A raised PSA level for your age may suggest that you have a problem with your prostate, such as cancer.

This leaflet will help answer the following questions:

- What is involved in a PSA test?
- Why has my GP recommended that I have a PSA test?
- What is a raised PSA level?
- How accurate is the PSA test?
- What are the benefits and potential drawbacks of a PSA test?
- How should I prepare for my PSA test?
- What will happen next?

What is involved in a PSA test?

The PSA blood test can be done at your GP surgery. A small amount of blood will be taken from a vein in your arm and sent to a laboratory to test your PSA level.

Why has my GP recommended that I have a PSA test?

Your GP may recommend a PSA test if you have symptoms suggesting a prostate problem or if you are felt to be at a higher risk of developing prostate cancer.

What is a raised PSA level?

A raised PSA level is when the blood test shows a higher level of PSA in your blood than would be expected for your age. A raised PSA could be a sign of cancer however there are other conditions that also cause a raised level, such as an enlarged prostate or a urinary tract infection.

How accurate is the PSA test?

A PSA test is not perfect and will not identify all prostate cancers. In fact, around 3 in 4 men with a raised PSA level do not have cancer. Possible alternative reasons for a raised PSA level include infection, vigorous exercise and ejaculation. It is also possible that a PSA test may miss prostate cancer, with around 1 in 7 men with prostate cancer not having a raised PSA level.

It is therefore important that you take the time to think about whether you would like to have a PSA test, and please do talk with your GP if you feel uncertain.

Patient safety notice

- If your symptoms change, progress, or worsen please inform your GP practice urgently. If you can't contact your GP practice, please contact 111 or go directly to your nearest Accident and Emergency department.
- Ensure that your healthcare professional has your most up-to-date contact number and address.
- If you will need a translator for your appointment, please contact the clinic or hospital directly to let them know beforehand.

What are the benefits and potential drawbacks of a PSA test?

A normal PSA test can be reassuring. However, the test can be normal when you do have prostate cancer and therefore may provide false reassurance.

The test can help guide further investigations that are needed to diagnose prostate cancer. However, a PSA test can be raised when you do not have prostate cancer which could result in unnecessary worry and medical investigations.

Some prostate cancers are fast-growing and having a PSA test could help to find and treat cancer earlier when there is the best chance of a full recovery. However, the test itself does not distinguish between fast-growing and slow-growing cancers. A slow-growing cancer may never cause any symptoms or shorten life and therefore the test could cause you unnecessary worry.

How should I prepare for my PSA test?

If you do decide to have a PSA test, you should not have ejaculated or exercised heavily for 2 days beforehand as this may affect the result.

It is important to inform your GP if you have had a urinary tract infection or a prostate biopsy in the last 6 weeks as this may alter when you have the blood test.

What will happen next?

Your results can take up to 14 days to come back. If you have not heard from your GP practice within 2 weeks, please contact them.

If your PSA is raised, your GP will discuss with you the next steps which may include further investigations or a urology referral.

Where can I find more information and support?

You can access further information and support through [Prostate Cancer UK](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your GP practice.