Tests and treatments for prostate cancer: the latest advice for men

It can be hard to know which tests and treatments to get for prostate cancer. This report pulls together the latest advice from experts. You can use this report to talk with your doctor.

There was a time when men over age 50 were automatically screened for prostate cancer, even if they did not have significant risk factors or symptoms. But that advice has changed.

Use this report to better understand whether you need certain tests and treatments for prostate cancer. You can also use this report to talk to your doctor.
Tests for prostate cancer

Prostate cancer tests can help you get the treatment you need and they can help you decide whether it’s best to pursue active treatment or an approach known as “watchful waiting.” But some tests can be harmful. So talk with your doctor about your options. Here are some facts about tests.

PSA test

This test checks the level of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. A high level could be a sign of cancer. Or it could be a sign of something else, such as an infection, an enlarged prostate, a recent ejaculation, or a long bike ride.

Today, experts say that routine PSA screening isn’t needed. In fact, it could lead to tests and treatments that you don’t need. That’s because most prostate cancers grow and spread slowly. Many men over age 50 have some cancerous cells in their prostate, but they may never spread or cause harm.

Do you need a PSA test?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are...</th>
<th>Experts say...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At risk for prostate cancer</td>
<td>Talk with your doctor. Discuss the risks and benefits of PSA testing and treatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between ages 50 and 70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnosed with prostate cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likely to live at least 10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likely to live less than 10 years</td>
<td>There’s no need to get a PSA test.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older than 70</td>
<td></td>
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Biopsy

If your PSA level is high, your doctor may advise you to get a biopsy. That’s when a sample of your prostate is removed and tested for cancer. But you should know that a biopsy has risks, including infection, urinary problems, or pain, so discuss this with your doctor.

If there are cancer cells in the sample, your doctor gives the cancer a Gleason score:

- A low Gleason score means the cancer is likely to grow and spread slowly. Most prostate cancers have a low Gleason score.
- A high Gleason score means the cancer is likely to grow and spread quickly.

Imaging tests

Imaging tests, such as MRI and ultrasound, take a picture of the inside of your body. These tests may be done if a biopsy shows you have prostate cancer. They can check if you have cancer. They can also show if the cancer has grown or spread.

If you have a low Gleason score or a PSA reading below 10 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL), you usually don’t need an imaging test.
Watchful waiting or active treatment?

If your cancer … | Experts advise …
---|---
Is likely to grow and spread **slowly** | **Watchful waiting.** This may include:

• Biopsy
• Imaging tests
• Periodic PSA tests (See “Tests for prostate cancer”)

Is likely to grow and spread **quickly** | **Active treatment.** This may include:

• Radiation to shrink the tumor and kill cancer cells
• Surgery to take out part or all of your prostate