

Prostate specific antigen (PSA) test: yes or no?

Use this **Option Grid™** decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional decide whether or not you will have a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. This test measures the amount of activity in your prostate. Men usually consider this test when they are aged 50 or older.

Frequently Asked Questions ↓	Having a PSA test	Not having a PSA test
If my PSA level is high, what are the chances that I have prostate cancer?	30 in every 100 men with a high PSA level (30%) have prostate cancer. Other causes of a high PSA level are inflammation and infection.	If you choose not to get the PSA test then you will not know your PSA level.
If my PSA level is normal, can I be sure that I don't have prostate cancer?	No, you cannot be sure. About 15 in every 100 men (15%) with a normal PSA level do have prostate cancer.	If you choose not to get the PSA test then you will not know your PSA level.
Will getting the PSA test reduce my risk of dying from prostate cancer?	At most, 1 death is prevented for every 1000 men who get the PSA test (0.1%). 4 in every 1000 men who get the PSA test (0.4%) still die from prostate cancer.	5 in every 1000 men who do not get the PSA test (0.5%) die from prostate cancer.
What are the advantages?	If you are found to have an aggressive cancer you could benefit from early treatment. 33 in every 100 prostate cancers found (33%) are aggressive. 10 in every 100 aggressive cancers treated (10%) will benefit from early treatment.	You will avoid the risks associated with the biopsies and treatments that could follow an abnormal PSA test.
What are the risks?	Because it is difficult to tell if a cancer is aggressive, you may undergo biopsies and/or treatments that would never have caused you problems. 67 in every 100 prostate cancers (67%) are not aggressive and do not cause problems if left untreated. Biopsies and treatments carry risks.	You lose the small chance of catching an aggressive cancer that would be found with a PSA test and would benefit from early diagnosis and treatment.
What risks are associated with a prostate biopsy?	About 30 in every 100 men who have a biopsy (30%) will develop problems afterwards such as infection, pain or bleeding that lasts a few days.	You will avoid these risks if you do not get the PSA test because you will not be offered a prostate biopsy.
What are the risks associated with prostate cancer treatment?	About 30 in every 100 men treated for prostate cancer (30%) have longstanding problems with erections, and about 20 in every 100 men (20%) will leak urine.	You will avoid these risks if you do not get the PSA test because you will not be offered treatment.
What are the National recommendations?	Does not apply	The US Preventive Services Task Force does not recommend testing if there are no risks or symptoms. The American Cancer Society and the American Urological Association recommend that men discuss this issue with a healthcare provider.

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