Prostate problems and the PSA test

Common prostate problems and what a PSA blood test can tell you

What is the prostate?

A walnut-sized gland under the bladder, wrapped around the tube that carries urine out. It helps make semen and often grows with age. Trans women and some non-binary people have a prostate too.

⚠ **Cannot pass urine at all, with a painful swollen lower tummy?** Call 999 or go to A&E now. The bladder needs draining with a tube (catheter).

You might notice

- Peeing more often, especially at night
- Sudden urges that are hard to hold in
- Blood in your urine or semen
- A weak or slow stream, or straining
- Dribbling, or not feeling fully empty
- Bone or back pain, or weight loss

Common prostate problems

Enlarged prostate (BPH)

Very common after 50. Not cancer, but can slow the flow

Prostatitis

Infection or inflammation: fever, pain and stinging urine

Prostate cancer

Often no early symptoms, and often slow growing

Other causes

Overactive bladder, infection, diabetes or medicines

The PSA blood test

PSA is a protein made by the prostate. A raised level can come from enlargement, infection or cancer: it is a clue, not a diagnosis.

It can help

Find a cancer early, before any symptoms, when treatment works best

But be aware

About 3 in 4 men with a raised PSA do not have cancer, and it can miss some

Who is more at risk of prostate cancer

Aged 50 and over

Black or mixed Black ethnicity

Father or brother with prostate cancer

BRCA gene variant

Family history of breast or ovarian cancer

Please turn over for getting ready for a PSA test, what the doctor will do and when to get help

Getting ready for a PSA test

No ejaculation for 48 hours. Sex or masturbation can raise PSA for a while.

No hard exercise for 48 hours. Cycling in particular can push PSA up.

Avoid prostate stimulation. No receptive anal sex for a week before.

Wait 6 weeks after a urine infection, a biopsy or having a catheter.

Tell us your medicines. Finasteride and dutasteride lower PSA.

No need to fast. Eat and drink as normal on the day of the test.

What the doctor will do

1. Talk through your symptoms, your risk and whether a PSA test is right for you
2. Test your urine and, if you agree, gently check the prostate by examination
3. Take the blood test and explain your result for your age
4. Treat the cause, repeat the test, or refer you to a specialist for an MRI scan

Tell the doctor about any family history of prostate, breast or ovarian cancer, and every medicine or supplement you take.

Call 999 or go to A&E if

- You cannot pass urine at all
- High fever, shaking and very unwell
- New back pain with weak or numb legs
- Loss of bladder or bowel control

Contact us the same day if

- Fever with pelvic or groin pain
- Stinging or burning when you pee
- Blood in your urine
- Passing much less urine than usual

If your PSA is raised

A raised PSA is not a cancer diagnosis, and most men with one do not have cancer. The test is often repeated first. If it stays high, or the prostate feels unusual, you may be referred for an MRI scan, with a biopsy only if the scan shows a concern. Many prostate cancers grow slowly and are safely watched rather than treated. Enlarged prostate and prostatitis are very treatable too.

Our GP by SRS Health Group
14 Dudhope Street
Dundee DD1 1JU

Contact us
+44 7857 761328
care@ourgp.co.uk · ourgp.co.uk

Out of hours
NHS 24: call 111
Support: prostatecanceruk.org

Based on NICE CKS (2025–2026), BMJ Best Practice (2026), Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer and Prostate Cancer UK. October 2026.