



Education

PSA Test

What is the PSA test?

The PSA test measures the level of prostate specific antigen in your blood. PSA is an enzyme that is produced by a man's prostate gland.

Why is this test done?

The PSA test can help check for disease in the prostate gland. It is usually done, along with a rectal exam, to screen for prostate cancer in older men. It is also done if you have trouble urinating. Because the prostate gland surrounds the tube that empties the bladder, prostate problems are a common cause of urinary problems.

How do I prepare for this test?

- Avoid having sex for 24 hours before your test. Ejaculation during this time might cause your PSA level to be higher than normal.
- You may need to avoid taking certain medicines before the test because they might affect the test result. Make sure your health care provider knows about any medicines, herbs, or supplements that you are taking. Don't stop any of your regular medicines without first consulting with your health care provider.
- Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions.

How is the test done?

A small amount of blood is taken from your arm with a needle. The blood is collected in tubes and sent to a lab.

Having this test will take just a few minutes of your time. There is no risk of getting AIDS, hepatitis, or any other blood-borne disease from this test.

How will I get the test result?

Ask your health care provider when and how you will get the results of your test.

What does the test result mean?

The normal range for the PSA test is less than 4.0 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL) in most men. If you are over 40 years old and have a family history of prostate disease or if you are an African-American man over 40 years old, some doctors suggest that a level higher than 2.5 ng/mL should be checked with more tests. These 2 groups of men have an increased risk of prostate cancer.

The PSA level may be higher than normal if:

- You have benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). BPH is a common condition of older men that occurs when the prostate grows larger with aging. BPH is not a form of cancer.
 - You have a condition that inflames or irritates the prostate gland. Examples of such conditions are infection of the prostate gland (prostatitis), severe infection elsewhere in the body, injury, biopsy, vigorous massage, heart attack or recent heart bypass surgery, Foley catheter placement, or endoscopy of the bladder or kidney through the urethra.
 - You ejaculate within 24 hours before the test.
 - You have prostate cancer.
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What if my test result is not normal?

Test results are only one part of a larger picture that takes into account your medical history and current health. Sometimes a test needs to be repeated to check the first result. Talk to your health care provider about your result and ask questions. Ask if you need to repeat your test or have other tests.

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