

## **Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Testing For Prostate Cancer**

The PSA test is a blood test used to screen for prostate cancer. Many men get the test and/or a rectal exam as part of their “check-up” visits. But experts disagree on whether PSA testing is right for everyone.

In 2014 the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care recommended not to screen using PSA as most men do not benefit from having a PSA test done... in fact, it can do more harm than good in many cases. This is a strong recommendation for men under age 55 or over age 69. Men aged 55–69, who are thinking about having a PSA test, should discuss the harms and benefits with their healthcare provider as the recommendation against screening is weak for this age group.

### **What is the benefit of a PSA test?**

1000 men need to be screened for 13 years to save ONE death from prostate cancer.

### **Harms of PSA screening:**

- If your PSA is high, you may need other tests to screen for cancer – which often show that a high PSA is not caused by cancer.
- PSA tests have a high rate of “false positive” results. This means the test results seem to show cancer, BUT no cancer is actually present. This can affect travel and disability/life insurances.
- In many men, prostate cancer that is found by screening doesn’t grow or cause any symptoms. Even if it does, it often grows so slowly that it doesn’t cause any health problems during a man’s lifetime (it is harmless). So, many cases of prostate cancer do not need treatment.
- The test can also show a “false negative” result. This means no cancer is detected, BUT there really is a cancer there... this is false reassurance.
- The decisions you make based on a positive test result can cause harm – for example, you might decide to have a prostate biopsy which can result in pain, bleeding and infection. If you end up having surgery or radiation, your chances of incontinence or erectile dysfunction are around 2–4%.

### **Benefits of PSA screening:**

- Having a normal PSA test can be reassuring, although there is no level that absolutely rules out prostate cancer.
- If found early, prostate cancer may be curable.

### **BEFORE deciding to have a PSA test now, later, or not at all:**

- Give yourself time to make an informed decision.
- Talk to your spouse, partner or members of your family.
- Talk to your health provider.
- Watch the Youtube Video: DocMikeEvans “The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTgSODuhaUU>

### **If you choose to have a PSA Test:**

- Do not have ejaculations for 48 hours.
- Do not do any vigorous exercise, especially cycling, for 24–48 hours.
- Make sure you do not have a urinary infection (e.g., pain, burning) or prostate infection (pain or discomfort in the low back +/- or genital/anal region, sometimes fever or burning urination).

