

Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Test

Early Detection of Prostate Cancer



men in Canada will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.

The third leading cause of cancer death, when prostate cancer is detected early, it's more likely to be successfully treated.

What is PSA and how is it connected to prostate cancer?

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is a protein produced within the prostate gland. PSA is mostly found in semen, but small amounts can also be found in the blood of healthy men. PSA levels depend on age and naturally go up as you age. There are many reasons why PSA levels fluctuate and higher levels may indicate the presence of prostate cancer or other prostate conditions.

Prostate cancer is typically a slow growing cancer that can be present for many years before causing symptoms. Prostate cancer is highly treatable if diagnosed in the early stages and a PSA test can be valuable in aiding early detection.

What is a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test?

A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test is a simple blood test that measures the amount of PSA protein in your blood. Measuring PSA levels can be an useful tool in diagnosing prostate cancer as well as monitoring the progress of the disease in someone who has already been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Who should get tested?

If you are a man over the age of 50, it's recommended that you speak with your doctor about your risk of developing prostate cancer and whether you should have a PSA test. Your healthcare provider may recommend a PSA test if you:

- are almost 50 years old
- have a family history of prostate cancer
- are of African ancestry
- have symptoms of prostate cancer
- have already been diagnosed with prostate cancer and are being monitored

When is this test ordered?

A PSA test may be ordered by your healthcare provider to:

- help detect prostate cancer early even if you don't have any signs or symptoms
- check for cancer if you are experiencing signs or symptoms of prostate cancer
- confirm a diagnosis when other tests suggest prostate cancer
- predict a prognosis (outcome) for prostate cancer
- predict if cancer has spread outside the prostate
- plan treatment for prostate cancer
- monitor you if you are already being treated for prostate cancer
- determine if cancer treatments are working
- determine if cancer has come back after treatment



How can I get tested?

Testing is completed by LifeLabs at a Patient Service Centre or via our mobile lab service (available in select cities) through a simple blood sample. You will require a completed test requisition from your healthcare provider.

Understanding your results

Test results will be provided directly to your healthcare provider for discussion with you. The report will indicate:

1. Total PSA level in the blood
2. Free PSA level
3. Ranges for PSA levels

PSA levels depend on your age. As you get older, your PSA level will naturally go up. If you have a high PSA level, your doctor will talk to you about your options. A higher than normal PSA level doesn't always mean you have prostate cancer. High PSA levels can also indicate:

- an enlarged prostate due to benign prostatic hyperplasia
- an inflamed or infected prostate (called prostatitis)
- a urinary tract infection

It's important for you to discuss your PSA level results with your doctor. Your doctor will help you determine your risk of prostate cancer in relation to your age, family history and other personal information.

How is the test performed?

Blood sample

How much does it cost?

The price of this test varies by province. The test may be covered by your private insurance or provincial health plan under some circumstances. Talk to your doctor about your options.

When will I get my results?

Results are available to your healthcare provider within 2 weeks.

Sources

- Statistics Canada: "[Prostate cancer trends in Canada, 1995 to 2012](#)"
- [Prostate Cancer Canada](#)
- [Canadian Cancer Society](#)