

Prostate Health

What is the prostate?

- Walnut-sized gland in the male reproductive system
- Produces the fluid that keeps sperm alive
- Positioned below the bladder

What is prostate cancer?

- Prostate cancer occurs when cells in the prostate keep splitting, making new abnormal cells. These cells form a mass of tissue, called a growth or tumor. Tumors can invade and damage other tissue and organs.

What are the symptoms?

- Not being able to pass urine
- Weak flow of urine
- Urine flow starts and stops
- The need to urinate frequently, especially at night
- Pain or burning during urination
- Difficulty having an erection
- Blood in urine or semen
- Frequent pain in the lower back, hips or upper thighs

If you have symptoms of prostate problems or concerns about prostate cancer, talk to your doctor.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among men and one of the leading causes of cancer death among men in Anne Arundel County.

Learn To Live

Anne Arundel County Department of Health

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Risk Factors for Prostate Cancer

- Family History – higher risk if your father, brother or son had prostate cancer
- Age – the main risk factor. The chance for prostate cancer increases as you get older. In the United States, most men with prostate cancer are over the age of 65.
- Race – more common among African American men than white or Hispanic men.

Screening

- **Digital Rectal Exam**

The doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum and feels the prostate through the rectal wall to check for hard lumpy areas.

- **The Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Blood Test**

PSA is a protein made by the prostate gland and is found in the blood. The amount of PSA in the blood can rise naturally as men age or if problems with the prostate are present. Sometimes the level of PSA may rise in men who have prostate cancer.

The digital rectal exam and PSA test can detect a problem in the prostate. However, they can't show whether the problem is cancer or a less serious condition. If you have abnormal test results, your doctor may suggest other tests to make a diagnosis.

Better lifestyle choices now may prevent cancer later

Lifestyle Changes That May Prevent Cancer

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Increase your physical activity to at least 30 minutes a day.
- Quit smoking now. It's never too late.



What You Need to Know about Prostate Cancer Screening

- Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men.
- Certain men are at higher risk of prostate cancer:
 - African American men, men of African descent, men who have a father, brother or son with prostate cancer, and all men over 50 are at higher risk.
- Screening for prostate cancer:
 - There are two tests that may be used as screening tests for prostate cancer: PSA and DRE.
 - The PSA (prostate specific antigen) is a blood test.
 - The DRE (digital rectal exam) is where a doctor feels the prostate gland by putting a gloved finger inside the rectum.
 - The PSA test can find prostate cancer earlier than the DRE alone.
 - The PSA test result can be high because of *other* prostate problems--so an elevated PSA does *not* always mean cancer. PSA can be higher because a man ejaculated in the 1-2 days before the test. Also, the PSA test results can sometimes be normal even if a man has prostate cancer. Certain medicines can lower the PSA test results.
- After looking at the expected harms and the possible benefit from PSA screening, the United States Preventive Services Task Force in May 2012 recommended against PSA-based screening for prostate cancer.

Possible benefit of screening:

1 man in 1,000—at most—avoids death from prostate cancer because of screening over 10 years (based on current information).

Expected harms of screening:

For every 1,000 men who are screened with the PSA test:

- 30 to 40 men will develop erectile dysfunction or urinary incontinence due to treatment.
- 2 men will experience a serious cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack due to treatment.
- 1 man will develop a serious blood clot in his leg or lungs due to treatment.

For every 3,000 men who are screened with the PSA test:

- 1 man will die due to complications from surgical treatment.

- If a man is considering prostate cancer screening, he should have a thorough discussion with his medical provider to learn about the expected harms and the possible benefit of screening, subsequent diagnostic testing, and possible treatment so he can make an informed decision about whether he wants to be tested.
- If a man chooses to be tested for prostate cancer and if either the DRE or PSA is abnormal, he should be referred to a specialist (urologist) for further work-up.
- If a man has a high PSA test result or a PSA result that is rising over time, a doctor may recommend a biopsy (an examination of tissue removed from the body to discover the presence, cause or extent of the disease) to see if the man has prostate cancer. The biopsy and cancer treatment may cause side effects.
- If a man has early prostate cancer, he can choose how to handle the cancer.
 - He and his doctor may choose to wait and see if the prostate cancer is changing, known as “active surveillance.”
 - He may choose to have surgery, radiation therapy and/or hormonal therapy.
 - The treatments often have side effects, some of them are significant.