

Facts About Prostate Cancer Screening



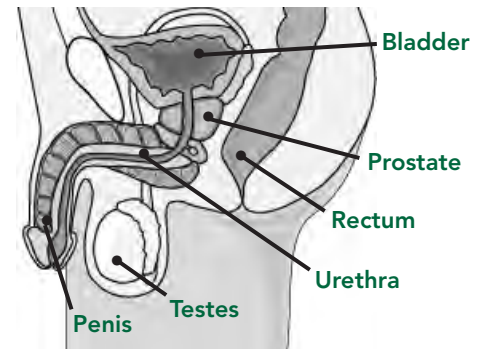
The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located in front of the rectum and below the bladder. It makes most of the fluid that makes up semen. After skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men.

At some point, 8 out of 100 men over the age of 50 will be affected by prostate cancer. Because most prostate cancers grow very slowly, five of them will live out their normal life spans. Three of them will die from it.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer usually has no symptoms in its early stages. Most men don't know they have it until it is found during a regular medical exam.

The most common symptom is trouble urinating. But this also can be caused by an enlarged prostate or other health problem. If you are having trouble with urination, talk with your doctor or health care professional.



Screening for prostate cancer

Kaiser Permanente screens for prostate cancer in two ways.

- Digital rectal exams—your doctor puts a gloved, lubricated finger in your rectum to feel your prostate.
- PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood tests—measure a protein produced by the prostate.

What you need to know about prostate cancer screening

Screening and treating prostate cancer are controversial. We do know that:

- PSA and rectal exams help save lives and prevent future illnesses related to cancer.

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- These tests are not 100 percent accurate. An enlarged, infected, or inflamed prostate can cause abnormal results. If your test results are not normal, you may be referred to a urologist for more tests.

If cancer is found, talk with your doctor about the best way to treat it. Some treatments have a risk of incontinence (not being able to control urination) or impotence (not being able to have an erection). Your doctor will talk with you about these and other risks.

When to screen

When to start screening depends on your age and your risk factors.

Under age 50 with risk factors:

- Over age 40
- Have a brother or father diagnosed with prostate cancer
- African-American men

Age 50 to 70

All men in this age group, regardless of risk, qualify for screening.

Over age 70

Because most deaths from prostate cancer happen before age 70, screening is not needed. Most men who develop prostate cancer after age 70 die of other causes.

Additional resources

- Connect to our Web site at **kp.org** to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and more.
- **cancer.gov**
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.