

Information for Patients

Prostate specific antigen (PSA) testing is only recommended for people with a prostate who have symptoms of prostate cancer. There are possible harms from the investigations that may follow a PSA test. Medical evidence tells us these possible harms are greater than the possible benefits of doing the test for people who do not have symptoms of prostate cancer.

About the condition

A PSA test is a blood test that looks for a raised PSA level. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate gland. It may increase in people with prostate cancer. But it may also increase in conditions which are not serious, such as urinary tract infections.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the test?

A raised PSA level may indicate prostate cancer. This raised PSA may therefore lead to further investigations such as an MRI scan or biopsy that can tell you whether you have cancer or not. If you do have prostate cancer you can then be referred for treatment.

What are the **RISKS**?

There are many reasons why PSA levels may be raised which are not related to cancer. Being told you have a raised PSA after a PSA test may cause unnecessary concern. A raised PSA level could lead to unnecessary further tests, including a biopsy. Biopsies carry their own risks.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

There is currently no reliable alternative blood test that can indicate prostate cancer. You should talk to your doctor if you have symptoms that may indicate prostate cancer. These symptoms may include blood in your urine (pee), urgency to pass urine, reduced flow of urine, unable to pass urine, needing to pass urine at night frequently, erectile dysfunction (unable to keep an erection), weight loss, lower back pain that won't go away and bone pain. Your doctor will then help you decide if a PSA test is needed.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

If you have no symptoms of prostate cancer, you are unlikely to come to harm by not having the PSA test.

For more information see [Prostate cancer - PSA testing - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

You can find out more about the [Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online