

Facts About Prostate Cancer Screening



The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located in front of the rectum and below the bladder. Next to skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men.

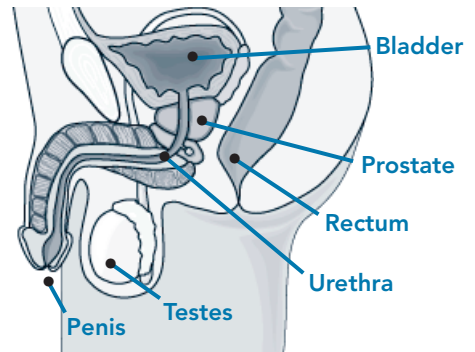
At some point in their lives, 8 out of 100 men over the age of 50 will have their lives affected by prostate cancer. Of those eight, three will die from prostate cancer. The other five will not have their lives shortened because most prostate cancers grow very slowly.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Early prostate cancer usually has no symptoms. However, having trouble urinating or urinating more often may be signs of prostate cancer. These symptoms could also simply mean your prostate is enlarged, or they can be signs of other health problems. If you are having trouble with urination, talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Screening for prostate cancer

Kaiser Permanente currently offers screening for prostate cancer with digital rectal exams and PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood



tests. During a rectal exam, your doctor or nurse practitioner feels for abnormalities of the prostate. A PSA blood test measures a protein produced by the prostate.

Facts you need to know about prostate cancer screening

The various methods for screening and treating prostate cancer are controversial. However, PSA and rectal exams may save lives and prevent future cancer-related illness. The test is not 100 percent accurate. If your test is abnormal, it may be due to enlargement, infection, inflammation, or trauma to the prostate gland. An abnormal test may result in referral to a urologist for further evaluation.

Aggressive therapy may be necessary in order to benefit from the detection of the cancer. This therapy may carry a risk of impotence

and bladder control problems for which treatment is available. As with most surgery, there is also a very small risk of death.

Recommendations based on the latest research

Under age 50

PSA and digital rectal exam screening are offered to men 40 to 50 years old at high risk for prostate cancer after being informed about the controversy surrounding risks and benefits.

You may be at high risk if:

- you have a family member (brother or father) who has been

diagnosed with prostate cancer and you are over age 40

- you are an African-American man

Age 50 to 70

It is suggested that the option of screening be offered to men 50 to 70 years old after they have been informed of the controversy surrounding risks and benefits.

Over age 70

We do not recommend screening because most prostate cancers that lead to death occur before age 70. Men who develop prostate cancer over age 70 will most likely die of other causes.

Other resources

For more health information:

- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-33-ASK ME.
- Visit our Web site at www.kp.org.
- Contact your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.