

PROSTATE SCREEN (PSA)

PSA (prostate-specific antigen) is a protein made by the cells of the prostate. The routine PSA test measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen in the blood. Rising or changing levels of PSA may be a sign of a prostate problem, perhaps as serious as cancer. According to the American Urological Association, prostate cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death among men in the U.S. Prostate cancer may be effectively treated, if detected early. For the most accurate results, a PSA blood test should be combined with a physical exam by a doctor.

What should I do about my results?

It is always recommended that you meet with a doctor to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your doctor will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, he or she will be able to provide an accurate picture of your health status.

If any of your results were abnormal or out-of-range: If your result was abnormally high it may indicate the presence of prostate cancer. Please note that PSA levels increase with age even in cancer-free men, and an elevated PSA level does not necessarily mean cancer. It is important to share your PSA results with your physician so that your results can be further investigated. Generally, the results from a PSA blood test and a digital rectal exam (DRE) along with your age are considered when estimating the level of risk for prostate cancer. As with any abnormal results, it's important that you discuss their implications with your physician.

If your results were within normal range: If your results were within the normal PSA range, you should consult with your physician for his/her recommendations on when you should be tested again. The American Cancer Society suggests men who are not at risk for prostate cancer should begin annual testing at age 50. African American men and men who are at greater risk for prostate cancer (those with a close relative who has had prostate cancer) should begin annual testing at age 45. Your physician is best suited to advise you on a timetable for all screening tests.