



- A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan
- A bone scan with or without X-rays
- An ultrasound scan
- A urine flow test

If you are worried at any point during these tests and would like help in making a decision, there is support available. Doctors, specialist nurses and other health professionals will discuss your case with you if you wish, or you may like to speak to one of our specialist nurses on our confidential Helpline on **0800 074 8383**.

## What tests are done by my GP?

### PSA test

The standard PSA test is a blood test that measures the total amount of PSA in your bloodstream. PSA is a protein produced by some of the cells in the prostate. A raised PSA level may show that there is a problem with the prostate. It cannot diagnose prostate cancer but the results of the PSA test together with other factors such as other test results, your family history and your ethnicity can help assess your risk.

The PSA test can be carried out by your GP or at the hospital. Your GP should give you information about the advantages and disadvantages of having the test and discuss any questions you have before you decide whether to have the test.

If you decide to have the PSA test, you may be asked to have a urine test first to check that you do not have a urine infection. Urine infections can affect your PSA result.

It can take up to two weeks to get the PSA test results. If the PSA result is abnormally high for your age, your doctor will either repeat the test, or arrange for you to have further tests.

The PSA result alone cannot tell you whether or not you have prostate cancer and a 'normal' PSA does not completely rule out prostate cancer.

If you would like more detailed information about the PSA test, call our confidential Helpline on **0800 074 8383**, or read our

booklet **PSA and beyond: A guide for men concerned about prostate cancer**.

### What can affect my PSA level?

All men have some PSA in their blood, and the PSA level can be affected by:

#### Age

PSA naturally rises with age because the prostate usually gets bigger with age. The accepted normal PSA test result is:

- Up to 3 ng/ml for men in their 50's
- Up to 4 ng/ml for men in their 60's and
- Up to 5 ng/ml for men in their 70's and over.

These are just rough guides. PSA levels will vary slightly between laboratories, as they may use different testing methods. There is no upper limit to the PSA test result and some men may receive results in the hundreds and thousands. This is uncommon but is likely to indicate the presence of prostate cancer.

#### A urine infection

A urine infection can cause the PSA to rise temporarily so you may have a simple urine test to rule this out. If there are signs of an infection the sample will be sent to the laboratory to check if there are any bacteria present. If there is an infection, you will be given a course of antibiotics. A further urine sample is usually taken one to two days after completing the course of antibiotics to make sure that the infection has been treated.

The PSA test should be repeated six weeks after the infection has been treated.

#### BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia)

BPH is a common condition that mainly affects many men over the age of 50. It is a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate. The increase in size may cause the prostate gland to produce more PSA. Read our booklet **Enlarged prostate: A guide for men concerned about benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)** for more information.

#### Prostatitis

This is an inflammation or infection of the prostate gland. The inflammation allows more PSA to move from the prostate into the blood





















# Questions to ask your specialist team

- What is my PSA level?
- Will I need a biopsy? What are the risks and side effects of having a biopsy?
- How many biopsy samples will you take?
- What are my Gleason grades and Gleason score?
- Will I need an MRI, CT or bone scan?
- What is the stage of my cancer? What does this mean?
- What treatments are suitable for me?

## More information

### **British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)  
Telephone 01455 883300  
15 St Johns Business Park, Lutterworth,  
Leicestershire, LE17 4HB  
This organisation will help you find  
trained counsellors.

### **Cancer Counselling Trust**

[www.cancercounselling.org.uk](http://www.cancercounselling.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 7843 2292  
Edward House, London EC1V 7LT  
Provides a UK wide telephone counselling  
service and a face-to-face service at their  
London office.

### **Citizens Advice**

See your phone book for contact details  
of your local service.  
[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)  
Information and advice on getting financial  
help with the costs of cancer including travel  
and prescriptions.

### **Healthtalkonline**

[www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)  
Patients share their experience of illness,  
diagnosis, treatment and care.

### **'Going for a' website**

[www.goingfora.com](http://www.goingfora.com)  
Virtual hospital from the Royal College  
of Radiologists. Interactive information  
on cancer treatment and scans. Includes  
descriptions from both staff and patients.

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)  
Freephone Cancerline 0808 808 2020  
89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ  
Practical, emotional and financial support  
for people with cancer. Please note that  
Macmillan Cancer Support has merged  
with Cancerbackup.

### **Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres**

[www.maggiescentres.org](http://www.maggiescentres.org)  
Telephone: 0131 537 2456  
Maggie's, The Stables, Western General  
Hospital, Crewe Road, Edinburgh, EH4 2XU  
Drop-in cancer information and support  
centres located in several towns and cities  
around the UK.

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to make sure that its services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope that these will add to the medical advice you have already been given and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your doctor if you are worried about any medical issues.

The Prostate Cancer Charity funds research into the causes of, and treatments for, prostate cancer. We also provide support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. We rely on charitable donations to continue this work. If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 8222 7666.

The Prostate Cancer Charity  
First Floor, Cambridge House,  
100 Cambridge Grove, London W6 0LE  
Email: [info@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:info@prostate-cancer.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 8222 7622

The Prostate Cancer Charity Scotland  
Unit F22-24 Festival Business Centre,  
150 Brand Street, Glasgow G51 1DH  
Email: [scotland@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:scotland@prostate-cancer.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0141 314 0050

Website: [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk)

	<b>Free and confidential Helpline</b> <b>0800 074 8383*</b> Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm, Wed 7pm - 9pm
--	---

Email: [helpline@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:helpline@prostate-cancer.org.uk)

© The Prostate Cancer Charity 2010  
Reviewed February 2010  
To be reviewed February 2012



\* Calls are free of charge from UK landlines. Mobile phone charges may vary. Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and The Prostate Cancer Charity.

A charity registered in England and Wales(1005541) and in Scotland (SCO39332)

---

References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available on our website.

**Reviewed by:**

- Janette Kinsella, Prostate Clinical Nurse Specialist, Guys and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust
- Mr Anup Patel, Consultant Urological Surgeon, St Mary's Hospital at Imperial College NHS Healthcare Trust, London, and Chairman of Clinical Research Committee, European Association of Urology Research Foundation.
- Bruce Turner, Uro-oncology Nurse Practitioner Homerton University Hospital
- Tessa Rodgers, Uro-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Conquest Hospital
- John McLoughlin, Consultant Urological Surgeon, West Suffolk and Addenbrookes Hospitals
- The Prostate Cancer Charity Support & Information Specialist Nurses
- The Prostate Cancer Charity Information Volunteers

**Written and edited by:**

The Prostate Cancer Charity Information Team