

PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING FACT SHEET

Be smart. Get the latest facts about the PSA test.

Then talk about it — with your provider, partner, family and friends.

Providers don't all agree that getting the PSA test to look for prostate cancer is a good idea. The test may lead to more harm than benefit for many men.

Should you get the PSA test?

Things have changed: Getting the PSA test is no longer automatic during a man's check-ups as he gets older. It's not like getting your blood pressure checked. **Now, the smart move is to talk with your doctor and decide together about getting the test—even if you've had it before.**

Here's what the medical experts are saying:

New research has shown that the PSA test doesn't work very well as a regular screening test for prostate cancer. It could help some men avoid dying from prostate cancer. But for many men, the test may lead to serious harms without providing any benefit.

How to decide if the PSA test is right for you:

There's no right or wrong answer. But think about:

- **Your individual risk.** If you are at high risk for prostate cancer, you may feel the possible benefit is greater than any harm that may come from the test.
- **What feels right to you.** Are you the sort of person who wants to get all the tests to be sure? Or do you take things as they come and are not likely to request tests unless your provider recommends them?

What increases your risk of prostate cancer?

Race. African-American and black men have a 50% higher risk.



Family history. Having a close relative who had prostate cancer raises your risk 2 to 3 times.



Age. The risk of prostate cancer goes up as you get older — especially after age 50.

**About the PSA Test****What is it?**

The PSA is a blood test. It checks levels of a protein (prostate-specific antigen) made by a man's prostate.

What does the PSA test do?

It won't give you a yes or no answer about prostate cancer. A high PSA level can be a sign of cancer, but usually it's not. You would need a biopsy to know for sure.

What are the benefits?

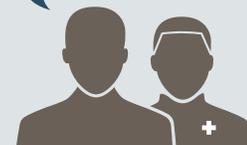
The PSA test may help catch a harmful type of cancer early. Treatment tends to work better the earlier you catch this type of cancer.

What are the risks?

The PSA test can lead to more tests, stress, and overtreatment. Some men wind up getting operations and radiation (maybe with serious side effects) that might not have been necessary.

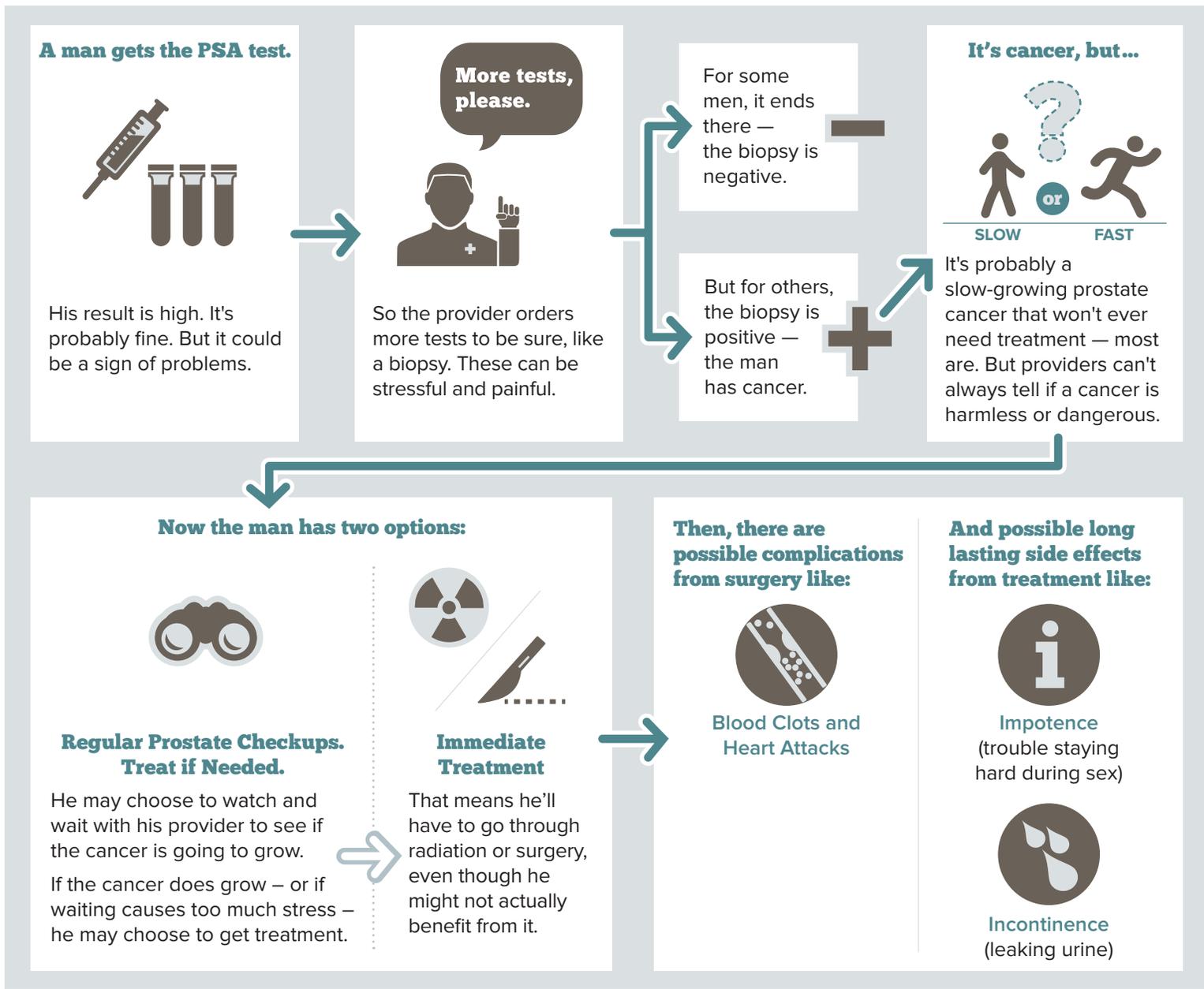
Have more questions about the PSA test?

Talk to your provider



How can a simple blood test cause harm?

It's not the test itself or the needle that draws the blood. It's that the test cannot tell you if you have prostate cancer, and it can open the door to more testing and treatment which might have harmful side effects. The harms and benefits at each step should be discussed with your provider.



Whether you get the PSA test or not, see your provider if you have symptoms like:

- Needing to urinate more often than usual
- Getting up during the night a lot to urinate
- Trouble starting or stopping urination
- Weak flow or dribbling
- Blood in your urine

Other conditions besides prostate cancer can cause these symptoms. But always get them checked out.

Still haven't decided whether to get the test?

That's okay. You don't have to make a final decision now. You can wait and think it over.

Learn more about PSA testing at: www.mass.gov/cancerscreenings

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