Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

What To Know About Prostate Cancer Screening

1 in 8 males will be diagnosed with prostate cancer.

What is Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer affects the cells in your prostate. Your prostate is a walnut-sized gland that makes and stores semen. It is located below your bladder and in front of your rectum.

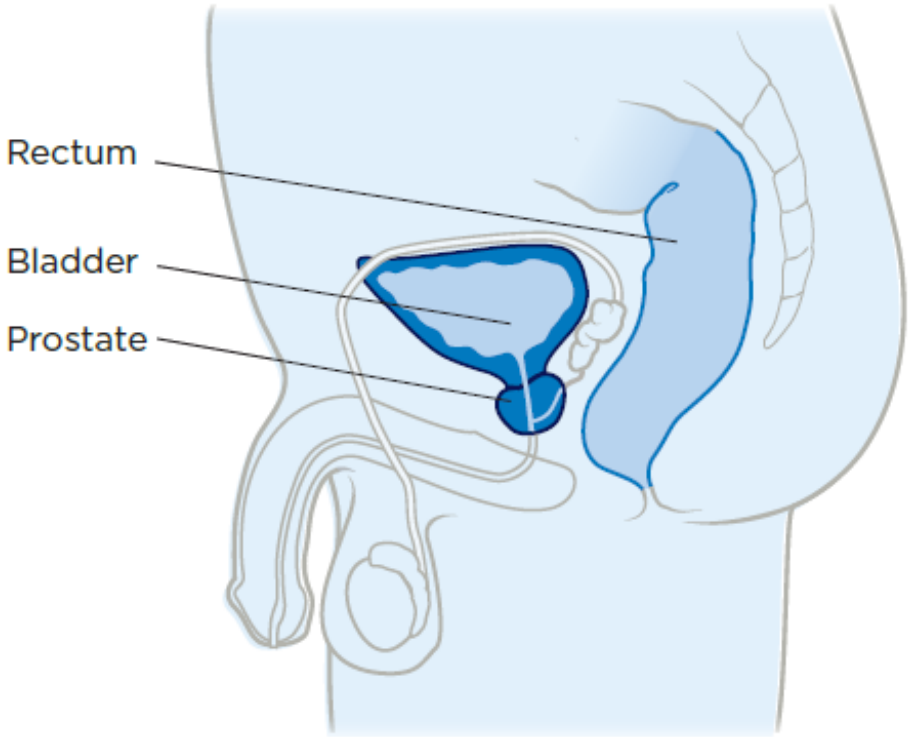

Figure 1. Prostate anatomy

What is Prostate Cancer Screening?

Checking for cancer (or for cells that may become cancer) in people who have no symptoms of cancer is called screening. Screening can find cancer early when it is easier to treat.

One type of screening test is a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test. This blood test measures your level of PSA, a protein made in the prostate gland. A PSA test can help find prostate cancer early when it is easier to treat.

What is My Risk For Prostate Cancer?

Knowing your risk for prostate cancer is the first step in deciding whether screening is right for you. A risk factor is anything that increases your chance of getting a disease, such as cancer.

Anyone with a prostate gland can develop prostate cancer. This includes people of all genders who were assigned male at birth, including transgender women. If you're a transgender woman and had gender-affirming surgery, you probably still have a prostate gland. You should talk with your healthcare provider about being screened.

Age is the biggest risk factor for prostate cancer. The older you are, the more likely you are to develop prostate cancer. Other factors that put you at higher risk for developing prostate cancer include:

- Having a close relative, such as a parent or sibling with prostate cancer. This is especially true if they were diagnosed before age 60.
- Having changes (mutations or variants) in certain genes passed down from a parent. These genes include BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes, HOXB13, and ATM. Our clinical genetics experts are available to help you understand your level of risk.

- Your race. Prostate cancer affects the Black community at a higher rate than any other race in the United States.

Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk for prostate cancer and the pros and cons of getting screened. This can help you decide whether screening is right for you.

Black males are 50% more likely to get prostate cancer than any other race.

Is Prostate Cancer Screening Right For You?

Most prostate cancers are not a problem because they grow slowly. Many people who get prostate cancer will live a long life. But prostate cancer can sometimes spread to other parts of your body. If you decide to have prostate cancer screening, MSK recommends you follow the latest guidelines below. These guidelines apply to people at average risk who are expected to live 10 years or longer. They may be different from those of other groups of experts.

- **If you're age 45 to 49**. Consider discussing with your healthcare provider the pros and cons of having a baseline PSA. If you decide to get a test and your PSA level is:
  - 3 ng/mL or higher, talk with your healthcare provider

about having a biopsy of your prostate.
    - Between 1 and 3 ng/mL, have another PSA test every 2 to 4 years.
    - Less than 1 ng/mL, have another PSA test between the ages of 51 and 55.
- **If you're age 50 to 59.** Consider having your level checked. If you decide to get a test and your PSA level is:
    - 3 ng/mL or higher, talk with your healthcare provider about having a biopsy of your prostate.
    - Between 1 and 3 ng/mL, have another PSA test every 2 to 4 years.
    - Less than 1 ng/mL, have another PSA test at age 60.
- **If you're age 60 to 70.** Consider having your PSA level checked. If you decide to get a test and your PSA level is:
    - 3 ng/mL or higher, talk with your healthcare provider about having a biopsy of your prostate.
    - Between 1 and 3 ng/mL, have another PSA test every 2 to 4 years.
    - Less than 1 ng/mL, no further screening is recommended.
- **If you're age 71 to 75.** Talk with your healthcare provider about whether to have a PSA test. This decision should be based on past PSA levels and your health.

- **If you're age 76 or older.** MSK does not recommend you get screened for prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer among males over 50 years old.

Actions You Can Take Today

- Know your risk for prostate cancer.
- Learn about the screening tests that check for signs of prostate cancer.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about whether screening is right for you.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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