



Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) FAQs

What is Prostate-Specific Antigen?

Prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, is a protein produced by cells of the prostate gland. Some of it is secreted into the bloodstream, where it can be detected and measured.

What is a PSA Test?

A PSA test is a blood test that measures the level of PSA in a man's blood.

What does a PSA Test result tell you?

If the level of PSA in a man's blood is elevated, it might indicate he has prostate cancer. Elevated levels can also be due to other reasons, including prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate) and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). In addition, different men have different natural PSA levels. That said, the higher a man's PSA level, the more likely it is that he has prostate cancer. Moreover, a continuous rise in a man's PSA level over time may also be a sign of prostate cancer.

What is considered an elevated level of PSA?

In the past, most doctors considered PSA levels of 4.0 nanograms/mL and lower as normal. Although this number can be used as a benchmark, the best indicator is a rise in PSA level from previous levels.

What happens after a PSA Test?

If a man is found to have an elevated PSA level, the doctor may recommend another PSA test to confirm the original finding. Because different men have different natural levels, making sure the PSA levels are rising is important to determine if it might be prostate cancer. If the PSA level is still high, the doctor may recommend that he continue with PSA tests and digital rectal exams (DREs) at regular intervals to watch for any changes over time. Alternatively, if prostate cancer is suspected, the doctor may recommend a prostate biopsy. The biopsy can confirm if cancerous cells are present.

Does an elevated PSA Test result always indicate cancer?

Most men with an elevated PSA level turn out not to have prostate cancer; only about 25% of men who have a prostate biopsy due to an elevated PSA level actually are found to have prostate cancer when a biopsy is done.