



X-Plain PSA - Screening for Prostate Cancer Reference Summary

Introduction

Prostate cancer is a common condition of aging men. The PSA blood test helps doctors detect it in its early stages. This reference summary will review the purpose of this test.

Anatomy

The prostate is a special gland located in the pelvis at the neck of the bladder.

The prostate is important in making components of the semen.

The sperm is made in the testicles. From there, the sperm travels to the prostate through two specialized tubes called vasa deferentia.

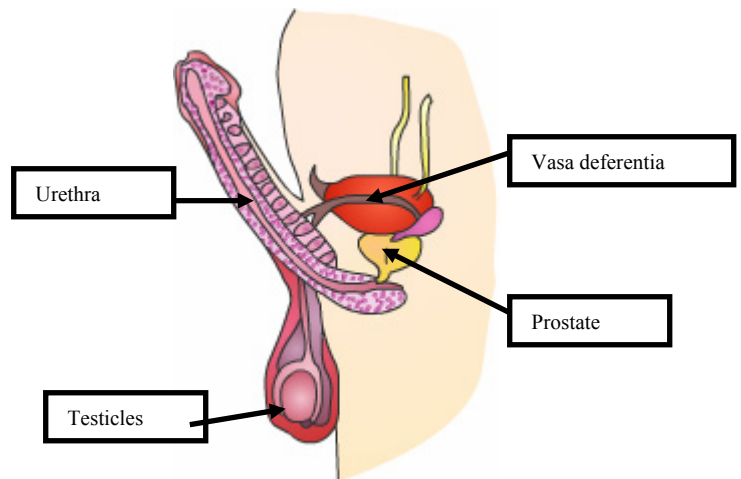
It is then mixed with special secretions from the prostate and the two seminal vesicles that are located near the outlet of the bladder.

Semen, the combination of sperm from the testicles and the secretions from the prostate and the seminal vesicles, is stored in the seminal vesicles.

During ejaculation, the semen is forced to the outside through the urethra.

Symptoms and their Causes

The prostate can become infected or inflamed. This could cause pain in the pelvic area as well as pain upon urination or ejaculation.



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Over the years the prostate may grow and strangle the urethra. This is known as “benign prostatic hyperplasia”.

In some cases, cancer can arise in the prostate. Prostate cancer can be fatal if left untreated.

PSA Test

To detect diseases of the prostate, your doctor may recommend a special blood test in addition to performing a rectal examination of the prostate.

This test detects a chemical made mainly by the prostate. This chemical is known as the Prostate Specific Antigen or PSA.

If the level of PSA is normal, the likelihood of having a prostate problem is very small.

If on the other hand the level is elevated, this could mean the prostate is infected, inflamed, enlarged, or has cancer.

The normal PSA level varies with age as well as with race.

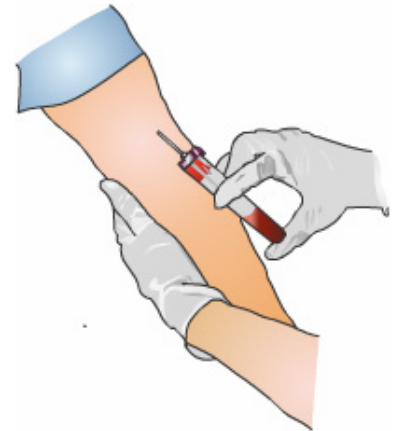
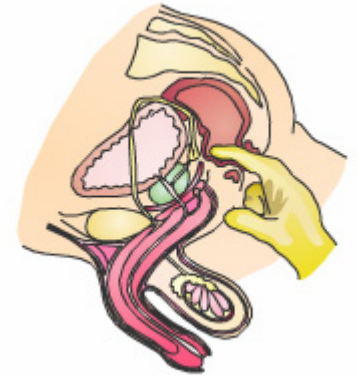
It is recommended that all men who are above the age of 45 have a PSA exam once a year. However, men who have a history of prostate cancer in the family or who are African-American should start having the PSA test earlier, such as age 40.

After the Test

If the results of the test show that your level of PSA is normal, your doctor will determine a schedule for further regular examinations.

If the test shows an abnormal or elevated level of PSA, your doctor may recommend additional tests to check for evidence of prostate problems.

You may be asked to have your urine examined.



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You may be given antibiotics or medications and have the PSA repeated.

Your doctor may repeat a digital rectal exam to further examine the prostate.

An ultrasound of the prostate may also be done along with some prostate biopsies if needed.

Your doctor will further recommend the appropriate testing depending on your specific condition.

Summary

If the level of PSA is found to be abnormal, the doctor may require additional tests or a second PSA test to determine if the prostate is healthy.

Knowing about tests, such as the PSA test will allow you to work with your doctor to help you achieve and maintain a healthy life.

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