

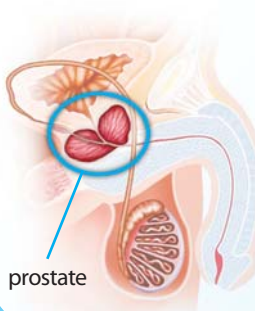


Screening for Prostate Cancer

Information for men and their families



1 What is the prostate?



The prostate is a sex gland in men that produces a thick fluid that forms part of the semen. It is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. The urethra runs through the centre of the prostate.

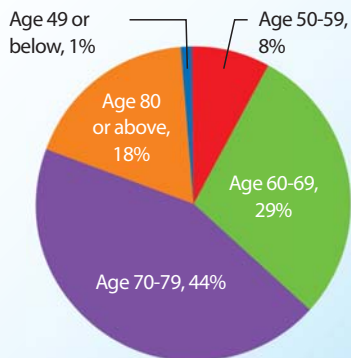
2 What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer results from an abnormal growth of the cells in the prostate. The rate of growth of prostate cancer cells differs widely in different persons. Some prostate cancers grow slowly and may not affect the health of the person while some grow rapidly, spread to other parts of the body and cause death.

3 Is prostate cancer common in Hong Kong?

Prostate cancer was the third most common cancer among men in 2010. There were almost 1,500 newly registered cases of prostate cancer in the same year and 40% of all prostate cancer occurred in men aged 75 or above. In 2011, there were 299 deaths due to prostate cancer in Hong Kong. Prostate cancer among men is on a rising trend in Hong Kong, but it is still low when compared to Western countries¹.

In 2010	In 2011
1,492 Newly Registered Cases	299 Deaths



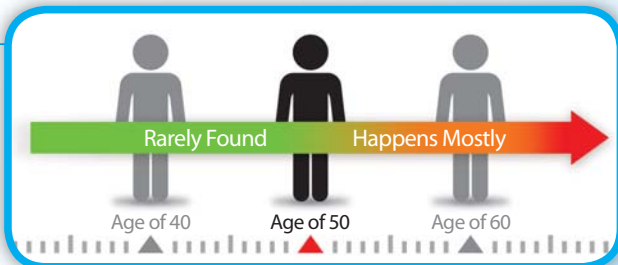
Age distribution of new prostate cancer cases in men, 2010

¹ This statement refers to the age-standardised incidence rate of prostate cancer.

4 What are the risk factors?

The causes for prostate cancer are not yet fully understood. However, we know that there are several major risk factors for prostate cancer, which include:

- Age: prostate cancer happens mostly in older men and is rarely found in men below the age of 50
- A family history of prostate cancer



Results from studies on other risk factors are inconclusive.

5 What are the common symptoms?

Early prostate cancer may have no symptom. Common symptoms of prostate cancer include:



- Difficulty or delay in passing urine
- Slow or weak stream of urine
- Blood in urine
- Pain in the lower back, pelvis and hips

However, most of these symptoms are also found in men suffering from benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), in which the prostate is enlarged due to tissue growth within the gland. BPH is not cancer, and can be easily treated to relieve the symptoms.

6 What should I do if I have suspicious symptoms?



You should consult a doctor immediately. The doctor will perform a physical examination on you and may carry out some other investigations, for example digital rectal examination (DRE), blood tests, urine tests, ultrasound examination or other procedures.

7 What tests will be done on me if I go for prostate cancer screening when I do not have any symptoms?

Two tests which are commonly used in screening are digital rectal examination (DRE) and total prostate-specific antigen test (PSA). However, studies have not shown that these tests are effective screening tests for prostate cancer.

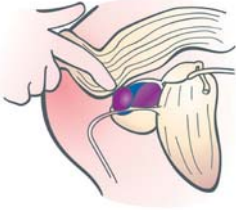
DRE

Digital Rectal Examination

PSA

Total Prostate-Specific Antigen Test

8 What is a Digital Rectal Examination?



The examination is performed by a doctor who will put a gloved finger into your back passage to feel the back portion of the prostate to determine whether the prostate is abnormal.

9 What is a PSA test?

The PSA test involves drawing a blood sample from you to measure the level of PSA in your blood. PSA is produced by prostate glands and released into the blood. Several abnormal conditions of the prostate like benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate) or prostate cancer can cause an increase in the blood PSA level.



10 How accurate are the screening tests?

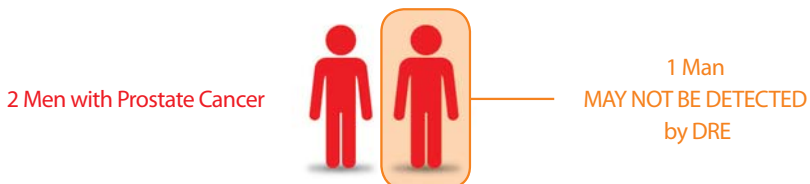
The accuracy of the DRE is dependent on the skill and experience of the person who performs the test. Based on overseas experience,

- about 5 out of 6 men with abnormal DRE results do not have prostate cancer,



and on the other hand,

- about 1 out of 2 men with prostate cancer may not be detected by DRE.



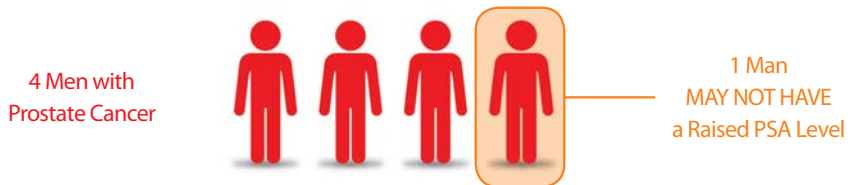
Since an increase in PSA level can be caused by conditions other than prostate cancer,

- about 3 out of 4 men with a raised PSA level do not have prostate cancer



and on the other hand,

- about 1 out of 4 men with prostate cancer may not have a raised PSA level.



This means that some men with abnormal DRE or PSA test results indeed do not have prostate cancer (false positive result) but they will be subjected to unnecessary further investigations. The proportion of false positives among those with abnormal DRE or PSA test results will be even higher in younger men.

On the other hand, some men with normal test results may indeed have prostate cancer and they will be falsely reassured by the test and the cancer is missed (false negative result).

11 What further tests will be done to confirm a diagnosis of prostate cancer?

If the results of DRE and/or PSA test, which are not definitive diagnostic tests, are abnormal, your doctor may refer you to a specialist for further investigations. Such investigations include a prostate ultrasound and removal of tissue samples (biopsy) from the prostate to determine whether cancer is present. Biopsy is invasive and there may be complications such as infection and bleeding.

12 What are the treatments for prostate cancer?

Treatments for prostate cancer depend on the size of the tumour, whether the cancer has spread and the presence of any other medical conditions. They may include the following:



- Watchful waiting – involves monitoring the patient by performing the PSA test and DRE regularly, and treating it only when the prostate cancer shows signs of growing
- Surgery – involves an operation aiming to cure the cancer by removing the prostate gland
- Hormone therapy – aims to reduce the size of the prostate and keep prostate cancer cells from growing
- Radiotherapy – involves a course of radiation treatment and may prevent the spread of cancer



All treatment modalities of prostate cancer, other than watchful waiting, may cause side effects such as infection, erectile problem, bowel and bladder problems.

13 How can I help myself if I have prostate cancer?

You can face the disease positively in the following ways:



- Understand your illness and its treatment
- Talk to someone trustworthy about how you feel
- Cooperate with the health care professionals who are involved with your care
- Take part in support groups to enhance the ability to self-care and for mutual support



- Maintain a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly under medical supervision
- Avoid stress, learn relaxation techniques and do things that you enjoy

14 Should I screen for prostate cancer if I do not have symptom?

The Hong Kong SAR Government's Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening (CEWG), based on a systematic review of scientific evidence, concludes that:



There is so far insufficient scientific evidence to recommend whether population-based screening for prostate cancer² in men without any symptoms should or should not be done.

Every screening test, together with the subsequent confirmatory tests and treatments, has associated potential risks which sometimes may outweigh the benefits. Prostate cancer is not always an aggressive disease. Some are slow growing and many men with prostate cancer do not die from it. Treatment is not necessary in this group of men and can cause temporary or long-lasting side effects.

Therefore, before deciding for yourself whether or not to have prostate cancer screening test, discuss with your family doctor about its pros and cons to **Make Informed Decision**. However, if any of your family members has suffered from prostate cancer, ask your doctor for any necessary screening.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS of having prostate cancer screening



- Earlier cancer detection may lead to higher rates of successful treatment
- Successful treatment may prevent more advanced cancer
- Treatment for early stage cancer may be mild and lead to less complication

POTENTIAL RISKS of having prostate cancer screening



- It may miss cancer even when it is present and cause false reassurance
- It may cause false alarm, unnecessary anxiety and potentially risky investigations when there is no cancer
- It may find cancers which are slow-growing and may not cause any symptoms or shorten life even if left undetected, and treating them may not be better than not treating them
- Subsequent investigations following screening test and treatment may have side effects such as infection, erectile dysfunction, and bowel and bladder problems

² Population-based prostate cancer screening refers to prostate cancer screening which is offered systematically to all individuals without symptom in a defined target group (e.g. certain age groups).

Cancer Prevention and Support Services

"Cancer Comrades" Cancer Hotline, The Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society

Phone 2987 8933

Service Hours 8 pm - 10 pm

Walking Hand-in-Hand Cancer Family Support, The Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society

Phone 3921 3777

Service Hours 10am-6pm (Mon – Fri); 10am – 2pm (Sat)

Website www.hkacs.org.hk

CancerLink Hotline, Hong Kong Cancer Fund

Phone 3656 0800 (Kowloon)

Service Hours 9am – 10pm (Mon-Fri); 9am – 6pm (Sat)

Phone 3667 3000 (Hong Kong)

Service Hours 9am – 6pm (Mon-Thu, Sat); 9am – 10pm (Fri)

Phone 3919 7000 (New Territories)

Service Hours 9am – 6pm (Mon-Thu, Sat); 9am – 10pm (Fri)

Website www.cancer-fund.org

World Cancer Research Fund Hong Kong

Phone 2529 5025

Website www.wcrf-hk.org

Patient Resource Centres

Queen Mary Hospital Cancer Counselling and Support Services

Phone 2255 3900

Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital

Phone 2595 4165

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Phone 2958 5393

Tuen Mun Hospital

Phone 2468 5045

Prince of Wales Hospital

Phone 2632 4030

Princess Margaret Hospital

Phone 2990 2498

Related information

You can get more information on men's health or related activities, or obtain promotion pamphlets and brochures related to men's health by the following ways:

Men's Health Programme, Department of Health

Website www.hkmenshealth.com

Fax 2575 4110

Email menhealth@dh.gov.hk

Central Health Education Unit, Department of Health

Website www.cheu.gov.hk



Health Education Hotline of the Department of Health:

2833 0111