



## WHEN SHOULD I GET CHECKED FOR PROSTATE CANCER?

The most important message is that **early detection is crucial**.

The difference between early detection and late detection can be life and death.

### So, what should I do to be on the safe side?

Even if you have no symptoms:

- At 50 years of age, you need to talk to your GP about PSA testing,
- If you have a family history of prostate cancer, do it at 45,
- If you're of African or Caribbean descent, do it at 45,

### So, who is at risk?

Prostate cancer is commonly perceived as something that only affects elderly men. It's true that the risk of developing it increases with age, **but that doesn't mean it's a disease that only affects old men.** Unfortunately, many men are diagnosed with prostate cancer in their 30.s, 40's, & 50's.

- prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men worldwide.
- there are around 4000 cases diagnosed in Ireland every year.
- Men who have a family history (a brother or father with prostate cancer) are **two-and-a-half times more likely** to get prostate cancer.

- the greater the number of family members with a history of prostate cancer, particularly if any were under 50, the higher the risk,
- there is increased risk for men with BRCA 1 or BRCA2 gene mutations. Again, family history is a warning sign here, i.e., if any of your family, male or female, have these gene mutations, this may indicate a higher risk of prostate cancer,
- men who are of African or Caribbean descent, **are two-and-a-half times more likely** to get prostate cancer.

### The bottom line:

1. If you're **50**, you should be talking to your GP about PSA testing.
2. If you have a brother or father who has had prostate cancer, or if there is family history of BRCA 1 or 2 gene mutations, do it at **45**.
3. If you're of African or Caribbean descent, talk to your GP at **45**.

### So, what exactly is a PSA test?

Couldn't be simpler – all that's needed is a simple blood sample. It's used to determine the concentration of PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) in the blood. It is the primary method of screening for prostate cancer. It's not a diagnosis, it's a screening tool – basically, an indicator for your GP or consultant that further investigation is needed.

### Some more information about prostate cancer:

Only men have a prostate gland. The prostate gland is usually the size and shape of a walnut and grows bigger as you get older. It sits underneath the bladder and surrounds the urethra, which is the tube men urinate and ejaculate through. Its main job is to help make semen – the fluid that carries sperm.

Prostate cancer occurs when some of the cells in the prostate reproduce far more rapidly than normal, resulting in a tumour. Prostate cancer often grows slowly to start with and may never cause any problems.

But some men have prostate cancer that is more likely to spread. These prostate cancer cells, if left untreated, may spread from the prostate, and invade distant parts of the body, particularly the lymph nodes and bones, producing secondary tumours in a process known as metastasis.

## Signs and symptoms:

Some men don't experience any symptoms of prostate cancer. The first red flag may only be raised during routine health check-ups.

Things to watch out for:

- Needing to pee frequently, especially at night,
- Finding it hard to start, or to hold back pee,
- A weak or interrupted flow,
- Painful or burning sensation while peeing,
- Difficulty in getting an erection,
- Painful ejaculation,
- Blood in your urine or semen,
- Frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or upper thighs.

For more detailed information on screening, diagnosis, and treatment see the 'Prostate Cancer' menu on the MAC website at

<https://macprostatecancersupport.ie>