

Is a PSA Test for Prostate Cancer Right for You?

Robert Pugach, Medical Director

Since prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men, this blog is one you should read. There has been some controversy of late about how often, at what age, and who should have a PSA test. Let's get the answer to the question: **is a PSA test for prostate cancer right for you?** Let's start by asking the following questions:

WHAT IS A PSA TEST?

The PSA test, or prostate specific antigen, is the most accepted screening tool used for early prostate detection for decades. PSA is a blood test that measures the level of the substance secreted by prostate cancer cells. This test has saved hundreds of thousands of lives over the years, but it does have some drawbacks.

At Western States HIFU we review both your total PSA level and trends over time. We have the expertise of treating prostate cancer for 35 years and understand when to be concerned about an elevated PSA level. In general, PSA increases over time. It goes up as a patient's age increases. When it exceeds 2.5 in a patient below the age of 65, or 4.0 after age 65, it signals that cancer may be present.

WHAT IS A "FREE" PSA?

There is a subunit of PSA that is not bound to proteins in your blood stream. It's called the "free" PSA. When it drops below 25% it also signals the possibility of prostate cancer. In fact, Dr. Pugach had prostate cancer diagnosed in 2017 because his free PSA was low. His total was only 1.1 (very normal) but his free fraction was only 18%. Biopsies confirmed the presence of a small prostate cancer. He was treated with HIFU and is completely cancer free with normal function. This is why PSA testing is so important.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A PSA?

Since the PSA test became standard, death rates for men with prostate cancer have dropped by more than one-half. 90% of cancers are caught before they spread using the PSA test. It is especially beneficial for younger men with certain risk factors, such as:

- A family history of prostate cancer or similar cancers
- Being African American
- Having genetic mutations like BRCA1, BRCA2 and CHEK2 (we test for those!)
 - These men can have more aggressive types of cancer, and they are recommended to begin PSA tests between the age of 40 – 45.

The bottom line is that men need a PSA test at their annual physical starting between the ages of 40-50.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS OF A PSA?

Unfortunately, PSA levels can be higher due to factors unrelated to cancer. Sexual activity, inflammation of the prostate gland, and an enlarged prostate are some factors that can cause a man's PSA level to be higher.

These can result in false elevations of the PSA blood test. With proper counseling and evaluation like we provide at [Pacific Coast Urology Medical Center](#), we can provide guidance so you can clearly understand what your PSA results mean.

Our expertise has resulted in our practice becoming one of the premier prostate cancer treatment centers of the world. We literally have patients come to us throughout the United States and from all continents for the diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer.

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

At Western States HIFU we understand that each man is different and many considerations should be taken into account like your personal risk factors, your age, your overall health, your life expectancy and family issues if you are ever diagnosed with prostate cancer.

We are at the forefront of research into other ways to detect prostate cancer in order to make the results more refined and personal to you. Some of these advanced screening methods include:

- MRI of the prostate to detect higher risk aggressive types versus low risk
- PSMA and Axumin PET/CT scanning to localize potential prostate cancer areas before and after diagnosis
- DNA methylation testing to see if prostate cancer is present even if a biopsy is negative
- Genomic testing to understand the genetic potential of a prostate cancer

Schedule a consultation with us at [Pacific Coast Urology Medical Center](#) to discuss whether a PSA test is right for you, or call [\(844\) HIFU DOC](#) .