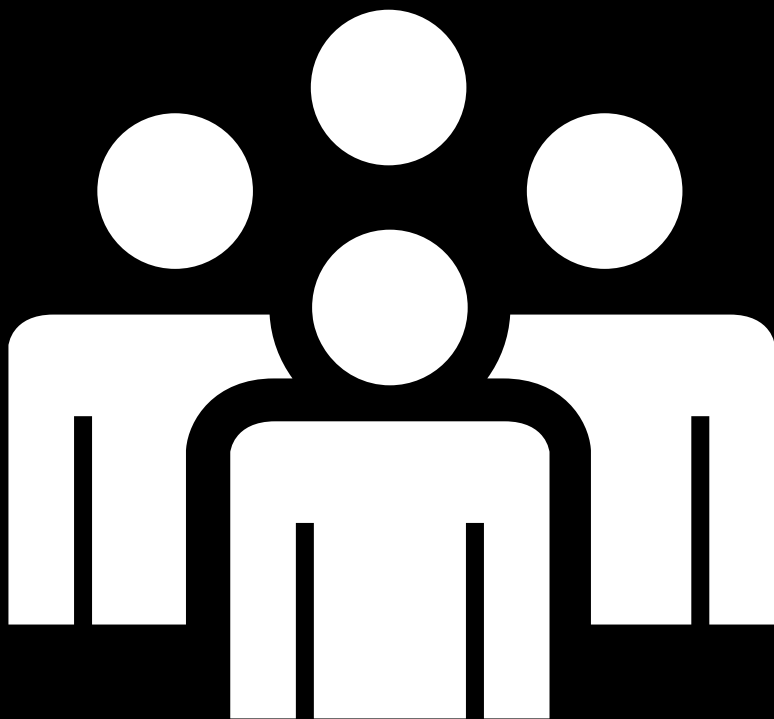


# Know your prostate

## A guide to common prostate problems



**PROSTATE  
CANCER UK**

## About this booklet

**This booklet is a guide to the prostate – what it is, what it does and what can go wrong with it. Your partner, family or friends might also find this booklet helpful.**

**We explain what the prostate is and describe the three most common prostate problems – an enlarged prostate, prostatitis and prostate cancer. We also explain what changes to look out for, what to do if you think you have a prostate problem and what might happen at the GP surgery.**

**If you think you might have a problem with your prostate, talk to your GP. You can also speak to our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383, or chat to them online.**

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The following symbols appear throughout the booklet:



Our Specialist Nurses




Our publications



Sections for you to fill in

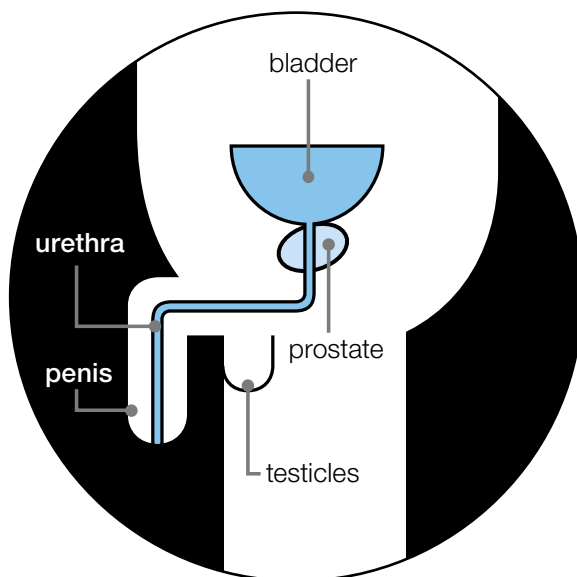
The photos in this booklet are of people affected by prostate cancer.

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## What is the prostate?

Only men have a prostate. The prostate 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 (pee) and ejaculate through. The prostate is a gland. Its main job is to help make semen – the fluid that carries sperm.



## What can go wrong?

The most common prostate problems are:

- an enlarged prostate
- prostatitis
- prostate cancer.

We explain more about these problems in the following pages.



## What changes should I look out for?

If you notice any changes when you urinate or have any urinary problems (see page 7), it could be a sign of a problem in your prostate.

Urinary problems are common in older men and are not always a sign of a prostate problem. They can also be caused by an infection, another health problem such as diabetes, or some medicines.

Your lifestyle can also affect the way you urinate. For example, drinking too much will make you urinate more often, while alcohol, caffeine and fizzy drinks can make some urinary problems worse.

### **Urinating: what is normal?**

Most people urinate up to eight times each day, depending on how much they drink, and their bladder can usually hold around 300 to 400ml. But everyone is different.

If your bladder is working normally, you should know when your bladder is full and have enough time to find a toilet. You should empty it completely every time you urinate and you shouldn't leak urine.

Most people can sleep for six to eight hours without having to urinate more than once. This will be affected by how much and how recently you had a drink before going to sleep. As you get older, you will probably need to urinate more often. You may wake up to urinate once in the early morning – this is common in older men.

☒ You might find it helpful to tick any problems you have and take this booklet with you to your GP or nurse.

Changes to look out for include:

- ☐ needing to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- ☐ difficulty starting to urinate
- ☐ straining or taking a long time to finish urinating
- ☐ a weak flow when you urinate
- ☐ a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- ☐ a sudden need to urinate – sometimes leaking urine before you get to a toilet
- ☐ dribbling urine after you finish urinating.

Less common changes include:

- ☐ pain when urinating
- ☐ pain when ejaculating.

A small number of men get blood in their urine or semen, or problems getting or keeping an erection. These symptoms aren't usually caused by a prostate problem, and are more often linked to other health problems.

### **Urinary problems are not usually caused by cancer.**

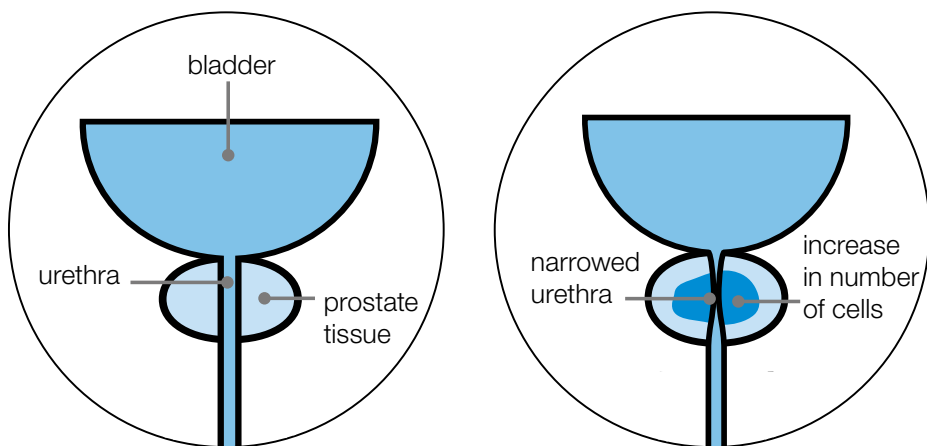
If you notice any of the changes we talk about here, speak to your GP or nurse. Or you can talk to our Specialist Nurses.



## What is an enlarged prostate?

The prostate gets bigger as you get older – this is called an enlarged prostate. You might also hear it called benign prostatic enlargement (BPE) or benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). It is **not** cancer and there are ways to treat it.

An enlarged prostate is very common in men over the age of about 50. As the prostate grows, it can press on the outside of the urethra (the tube you urinate through) and slow down or stop the flow of urine.



Having an enlarged prostate is **not** the same as having cancer.

Having an enlarged prostate doesn't increase your risk of getting prostate cancer. But it's possible to have an enlarged prostate and prostate cancer at the same time.



## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of an enlarged prostate include:

- ☐ a weak flow when you urinate
- ☐ a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- ☐ difficulty starting to urinate
- ☐ dribbling urine after you finish urinating
- ☐ needing to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- ☐ a sudden need to urinate – sometimes leaking urine before you get to a toilet.

You may not get all of these symptoms, and some men with an enlarged prostate don't get any symptoms at all. These symptoms can also be caused by other things, such as cold weather, anxiety, other health problems, your lifestyle, and some medicines.

## What can help?

Having an enlarged prostate affects men in different ways. Simple changes to your lifestyle can often help with mild problems – these include drinking less alcohol and caffeine. If these changes don't help, your doctor may prescribe medicines or suggest surgery.



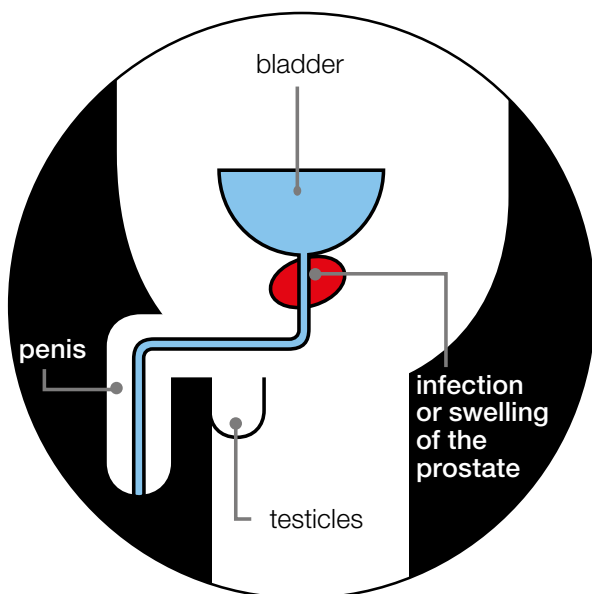
Find out more in our booklet, **Enlarged prostate: A guide to diagnosis and treatment.**

## What is prostatitis?

Prostatitis is the name given to a set of symptoms that are thought to be caused by an infection or by inflammation (swelling) of the prostate.

Prostatitis is **not** prostate cancer.

Prostatitis is common. It can affect men of any age but it's most common in men between the ages of 36 and 50. There are different types of prostatitis and we don't know very much about some types. This can make it difficult for doctors to know what causes it and how best to treat it. It can take some time to get a diagnosis, and you might need a number of tests.



## What are the symptoms?

Prostatitis can cause a wide range of symptoms that can be different from man to man. Symptoms can include:

- ☐ aching in your testicles, the area between your testicles and back passage (perineum), or in the tip of your penis
- ☐ pain in your lower abdomen (stomach area), groin or back
- ☐ difficulty urinating and a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- ☐ needing to urinate more often or urgently, especially at night
- ☐ pain or stinging during or after urinating
- ☐ feeling as if you are sitting on something like a golf ball
- ☐ no desire for sex (lack of libido)
- ☐ difficulty getting or keeping an erection (erectile dysfunction), pain or burning during and after ejaculation, and premature ejaculation – although these are less common.

In severe cases it can cause a high temperature and sweating, and you may need treatment in hospital.

## What can help?

There are things you can do to help yourself, such as getting plenty of rest, drinking lots of water, and cutting down on fizzy drinks, alcohol and caffeine. Your GP may discuss possible treatment options, such as antibiotics, pain-relieving drugs and medicines called alpha-blockers.

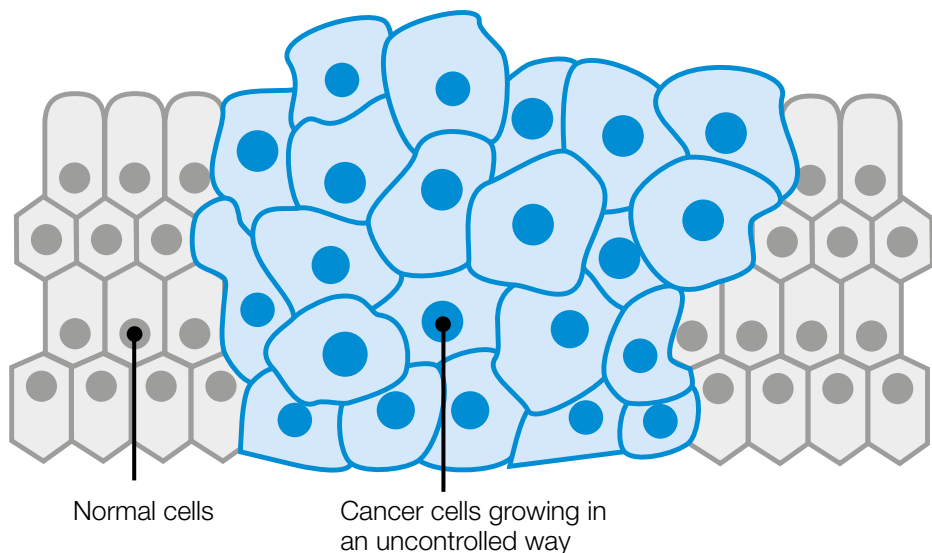


Find out more in our booklet, **Prostatitis: A guide to infection and inflammation of the prostate.**

## What is prostate cancer?

Normally the growth of all cells is carefully controlled in the body. As cells grow old and die, new cells take their place. Cancer can develop when cells start to grow in an uncontrolled way. If this happens in your prostate, you may get prostate cancer.

### How cancer develops



### What is my risk of prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK. About 1 in 8 men will get it at some point in their lives.

There are some things that may mean you're more likely to get prostate cancer.

## Your age

- Prostate cancer mainly affects men over 50, and your risk increases as you get older.
- If you are under 50, your risk of getting prostate cancer is very low. Men under 50 can get it, but it isn't common.
- The average age for men to be diagnosed with prostate cancer is between 65 and 69 years.

## Your family history and genes

Inside every cell in our body is a set of instructions called genes. These are passed down (inherited) from our parents. Genes control how the body grows, works and what it looks like. If something goes wrong with one or more genes (known as a fault or mutation) it can sometimes cause cancer. Some faults in genes can be passed on from your parents and could increase your risk of getting prostate cancer.

If people in your family have prostate cancer or breast cancer, it might increase your risk of getting prostate cancer. This is because you may have the same faulty genes.

- You are two and a half times more likely to get prostate cancer if your father or brother has had it, compared to a man who has no relatives with prostate cancer.
- Your chance of getting prostate cancer may be even greater if your father or brother was under 60 when he was diagnosed, or if you have more than one close relative (father or brother) with prostate cancer.
- Your risk of getting prostate cancer is higher if your mother or sister has had breast cancer.

If you have relatives with prostate cancer or breast cancer and are worried about this, speak to your GP. Although your risk of prostate cancer may be higher, it doesn't mean you will get it.

### Your ethnicity

Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer than other men. We don't know why, but it might be linked to genes. In the UK, about 1 in 4 black men will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives.

### Your body weight

No one knows how to prevent prostate cancer. But staying a healthy weight – for example by eating healthily and keeping active – may be important.

Research suggests that being overweight or obese can increase your risk of being diagnosed with prostate cancer that's aggressive (more likely to spread) or advanced (cancer that has spread outside the prostate). Read more in our leaflet, **Diet, physical activity and your risk of prostate cancer**.



## Does prostate cancer have any symptoms?

Most men with early prostate cancer don't have any symptoms.

One reason for this is the way the cancer grows. You'll usually only get early symptoms if the cancer grows near the tube you urinate through (the urethra) and presses against it, changing the way you urinate. But because prostate cancer usually starts to grow in a different part of the prostate, early prostate cancer doesn't often press on the urethra and cause symptoms.

If you do notice changes in the way you urinate this is more likely to be a sign of an enlarged prostate (see page 8), or another health problem. But it's still a good idea to get it checked out. Possible changes include:

- ☐ difficulty starting to urinate or emptying your bladder
- ☐ a weak flow when you urinate
- ☐ a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- ☐ dribbling urine after you finish urinating
- ☐ needing to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- ☐ a sudden need to urinate – sometimes leaking urine before you get to a toilet.

If prostate cancer breaks out of the prostate (locally advanced prostate cancer) or spreads to other parts of the body (advanced prostate cancer), it can cause other symptoms, including:

- ☐ pain in the back, hips or pelvis
- ☐ problems getting or keeping an erection
- ☐ blood in the urine or semen
- ☐ unexplained weight loss.

All these symptoms are usually caused by other things that aren't prostate cancer. But it's still a good idea to get any symptoms checked out by your GP so they can find out what is causing them and make sure you get the right treatment.

## What treatments are there for prostate cancer?

There are several ways to treat or monitor prostate cancer, depending on how quickly the cancer is likely to grow and whether it has spread outside the prostate.

Some prostate cancer grows too slowly to cause any problems or affect how long you live. Because of this, many men with prostate cancer will never need treatment. They can have their cancer monitored with regular check-ups instead. If these check-ups show any signs the cancer may be growing, they will be offered treatment that aims to cure it.

But some prostate cancer grows quickly and has a high risk of spreading. This is more likely to cause problems and needs treatment to stop it spreading. Some treatments will aim to get rid of the cancer completely. If it isn't possible to get rid of the cancer, there are treatments available that aim to keep it under control. For more information about prostate cancer and its treatment, visit our website at **[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)**

## What should I do next?

If you notice any of the changes we talk about in this booklet or you're worried about your risk of prostate cancer, visit your GP. It's important to get any symptoms checked out. Your GP will want to make sure you get the right diagnosis so you can get the right treatment, if needed. You can also call our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383, or chat to them online.



### What if I'm not registered with a GP?

You could ask family or friends who live near you which GP surgery they go to. Or you can find one near you on the following websites:

- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) in England
- [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) in Scotland
- [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) in Wales
- [www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net) in Northern Ireland.

You can also call NHS 111 to get non-emergency medical help if you don't have a GP.



### **What if I don't have time to see a GP?**

Some GP surgeries are now open in the evenings or weekends, so you should be able to see the GP or nurse at a time that is right for you. You can also ask for a phone appointment at some GP surgeries. Or you can call NHS 111 if you need medical help but it isn't an emergency.

## **What will happen at the GP surgery?**

If you have symptoms, your GP will ask you about them. They might ask how long you have had them, whether they are getting worse over time, and how they are affecting your life. They might ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your symptoms and medical history.

If you aren't sure how to explain your symptoms or concerns to your GP, take this booklet with you.

Your GP will check whether your symptoms could be caused by other health problems, such as diabetes, or by any medicines you're taking. They will also check whether your symptoms could be caused by your lifestyle.

If you don't have symptoms, your GP will ask you about your medical history. You should tell them if you have a family history of prostate or breast cancer.

### **Diary**

Your GP may ask you to keep a diary for a few days to measure how much you drink, what type of drinks you have, how much you

urinate, and how often. The aim of keeping a diary is to see what could be causing your symptoms. It will help your doctor to see if there are any lifestyle changes you can make that might help your symptoms, or to work out if you need any treatment or further tests.

## Urine test

Your GP may ask you for a urine sample to check for blood or an infection that could be causing your symptoms. You may need to give more than one sample. If you have an infection your GP will give you a course of antibiotics to treat it.

## PSA test

You may be offered a PSA test. This is a blood test that measures the amount of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate. It's normal to have a small amount of PSA in your blood, and the amount rises as you get older and your prostate gets bigger. If your PSA level is raised, you may need more tests to find out what's causing it.

There are advantages and disadvantages to having a PSA test. Your GP should explain these to you and discuss any questions you may have before you decide whether to have it.

You have the right to a PSA test if you're over 50 and you've talked through the advantages and disadvantages with your GP or practice nurse. If you're over 45 and have a higher risk of prostate cancer, for example if you're black or you have a family history of it, you might want to talk to your GP about having a PSA test.



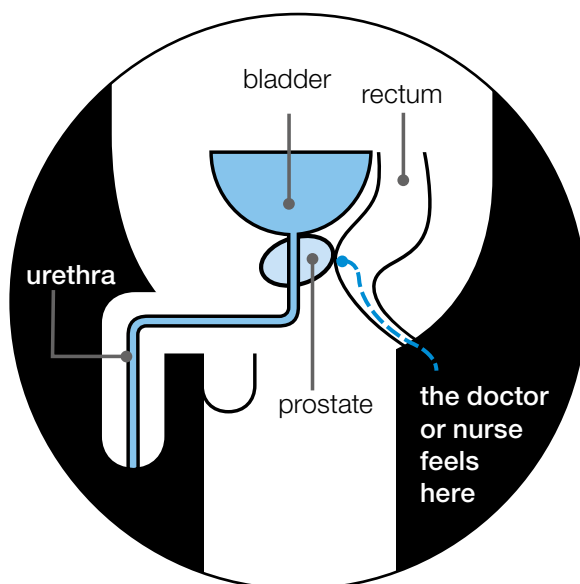
Read more in our booklet, **Understanding the PSA test: A guide for men concerned about prostate cancer.**

## Digital rectal examination

Your GP may feel your prostate through the wall of your back passage (rectum). This is called a digital rectal examination (DRE). If you have a DRE, the doctor or nurse will ask you to lie on your side on an examination table, with your knees brought up towards your chest. They will slide a finger gently into your back passage. They'll wear gloves and put some gel on their finger to make it more comfortable.

You may find the DRE slightly uncomfortable or embarrassing, but the test isn't usually painful and it takes less than a minute. If you're having problems urinating, your GP may also examine your abdomen (stomach area) and penis.

## Digital rectal examination



Your prostate may feel:

- **normal** – a normal size for your age with a smooth surface
- **larger than expected for your age** – this could be a sign of an enlarged prostate
- **hard and lumpy** – this could be a sign of prostate cancer.

If your DRE shows anything unusual, your GP will make an appointment for you to see a specialist at the hospital.

If you have a DRE, your doctor or nurse might suggest waiting a week before having a PSA test, or they might offer you a PSA test before they do the DRE. This is because having a DRE just before a PSA test could raise your PSA level.

### Worried about going to the GP?

It is natural to feel worried or embarrassed about having tests and check-ups. But don't let that stop you going to your GP. Remember, the tests give your GP the best idea about whether you have a problem that needs treating. You can ask to see a male doctor or a female doctor when you make the appointment.



You can also talk things through with our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383, or chat to them online.



**Having someone examine you from the rear isn't great but it's only a few seconds of discomfort.**

A personal experience

## What will the test results tell me?

It can take one or two weeks to get your test results. Your GP will talk to you about all your test results and what they might mean. If they think you may have a prostate problem, they may be able to discuss possible treatment options with you. Or, if your GP thinks you may need further tests, they may offer an appointment for you to see a specialist at the hospital.

## What tests might I have at the hospital?

At the hospital, the specialist may repeat some of the tests you had at the GP surgery. You may also have other tests, including the tests below.

### Symptom questionnaire

You may be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your symptoms. This is called the International Prostate Symptom Score (IPSS) and is used to see how bad your urinary symptoms are and how much they are affecting your daily life. The questionnaire takes about five minutes to fill in.

### Urine flow test

You'll be asked to urinate into a machine that measures the speed of your urine flow. If your urine flow is slow, it may mean that your prostate is pressing on the urethra.

You'll need a full bladder for the test. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how much to drink before you have the test. They may also ask you not to urinate for two to three hours before the test.

## Ultrasound scan

This shows how much urine your bladder can hold, and if it is emptying properly. You may have the scan after the urine flow test. The scan will show how much urine is left in the bladder after you urinate. You may also have an ultrasound scan to look at your kidneys.

## Cystoscopy

A thin tube with a light and camera on the end is put inside your urethra so your doctor can look inside your urethra and bladder.

You may have this test if you:

- have severe urinary symptoms
- keep getting urine infections
- have blood in your urine
- get pain when urinating.

## MRI scan

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan creates a detailed picture of your prostate and the surrounding tissues. You might have a special type of MRI scan, called a multi-parametric MRI (mpMRI) scan. This can help your doctor see if there is any cancer inside your prostate, and how quickly any cancer is likely to grow.

These scans aren't available in all hospitals. To find out if they're



available in your local area, speak to our Specialist Nurses.

## Prostate biopsy

This involves using thin needles to take small samples of tissue from the prostate. The tissue is then looked at under a microscope to check for cancer. Read more in our fact sheet, **How prostate cancer is diagnosed**.



# Questions to ask your doctor or nurse



**What is causing my urinary symptoms – is it a prostate problem?**

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**Am I at risk of prostate cancer?**

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**What tests are you going to do and why?**

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**How soon will I get the results?**

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**Will I need any other tests?**

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## More information from us

### Leaflets and booklets

We have a range of other leaflets and booklets about prostate cancer and other prostate problems.

### To order publications:

All our publications are free and available to order or download online. To order them:

- call us on 0800 074 8383
- visit our website at **[prostatecanceruk.org/publications](http://prostatecanceruk.org/publications)**

### Call our Specialist Nurses

If you want to talk about prostate cancer or other prostate problems, call our Specialist Nurses or text NURSE to 70004. You can also email or chat online with our nurses on our website. Visit **[prostatecanceruk.org/get-support](http://prostatecanceruk.org/get-support)**



**Speak to our  
Specialist Nurses**

**0800 074 8383\***

**[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)**

\* Calls are recorded for training purposes only. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.



# Other useful organisations

## NHS Choices

**[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

Information about conditions, treatments and lifestyle, and a directory of health services in England. Provides information about making a complaint about your GP.

## NHS Direct Wales

**[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)**

**Telephone: 0845 46 47**

Provides health advice 24 hours a day, and lists local health services in Wales, including GPs.

## NHS Inform

**[www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)**

**Telephone: 0800 22 44 88**

Health information and details of NHS and other support services in Scotland.

## nidirect

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)**

Information about government services in Northern Ireland, including GP services.

## Patient UK

**[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)**

Information that is often used by GPs to help explain health problems to patients. Also has a directory of UK health websites.

## About us

Prostate Cancer UK fights to help more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better life. We do this through Men United, our movement for everyone who believes men are worth fighting for. You can join Men United at **[prostatecanceruk.org/menunited](http://prostatecanceruk.org/menunited)**

At Prostate Cancer UK, we take great care to provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate diseases. We hope these will add to the medical advice you have had and help you to make decisions. Our services are not intended to replace advice from your doctor.

References to sources of information used in the production of this booklet are available at **[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)**

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- Dr William Ince, GP, The Humbleyard Practice, Norwich and Specialty Doctor in Clinical Oncology, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital
- Our Specialist Nurses
- Our Volunteers.

## Donate today – help others like you

Did you find this information useful? Would you like to help others in your situation access the facts they need? Every year, 40,000 men face a prostate cancer diagnosis. Thanks to our generous supporters, we offer information free to all who need it. If you would like to help us continue this service, please consider making a donation. Your gift could fund the following services:

- £10 could buy a Tool Kit – a set of fact sheets, tailored to the needs of each man with vital information on diagnosis, treatment and lifestyle.
- £25 could give a man diagnosed with prostate cancer unlimited time to talk over treatment options with one of our specialist nurses.

To make a donation of any amount, please call us on **0800 082 1616**, visit **[prostatecanceruk.org/donate](https://prostatecanceruk.org/donate)** or text **PROSTATE to 70004<sup>†</sup>**. There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit **[prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved](https://prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved)**

<sup>†</sup> You can donate up to £10 via SMS and we will receive 100% of your donation. Texts are charged at your standard rate. For full terms and conditions and more information, please visit [prostatecanceruk.org/terms](https://prostatecanceruk.org/terms)



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### Tell us what you think

If you have any comments about our publications, you can email: **[literature@prostatecanceruk.org](mailto:literature@prostatecanceruk.org)**



**Speak to our  
Specialist Nurses**

**0800 074 8383\***

**prostatecanceruk.org**



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**t Follow us on Twitter: @ProstateUK**

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To be reviewed April 2019

**Call our Specialist Nurses from Monday to Friday 9am - 6pm,  
Wednesday 10am - 8pm**

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