

PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING FOR MEN OVER AGE 80

Essential Reading for Men 81+ Considering a PSA Test



Screening means looking for a disease before it has manifested. Screening for prostate cancer (PCa) with the blood test PSA is therefore appropriate for men with no urinary problems to detect and cure potentially lethal PCa that would otherwise cause death.

All urological guidelines recommend PCa screening should not be performed for men with less than 10 years' natural life expectancy; in practice for men over age 75-80. This is because it takes an early, asymptomatic PCa about 7 years to manifest outside the prostate (advanced) and modern treatment can control even advanced PCa for, on average, 5 years. This would take a man with an early, asymptomatic PCa at 80 well into his 90s, by which time he is likely to have died from something else. Hence the well-known cliché "most men die with PCa, not from it". Therefore, for the vast majority of men over 80, PCa screening does not save their life and is of no benefit!

NICE Guidance states: There is a particular risk of over-diagnosing and overtreating prostatic cancer in men over the age of 79 where the prevalence is highest but the proportion of cancers which are clinically significant is lowest. For many patients in this group although they may have prostatic cancer it will not cause symptoms or impact their life expectancy. Tests and treatment may cause additional risks and anxiety.

There is no recognised or established normal ranges of PSA levels for men over 80. Although a small minority of men over 80 may benefit, a significantly larger number with an abnormal PSA may be led into a sequence of invasive tests that ultimately are of little benefit, usually due to detection of non-lethal, clinically insignificant PCa that would never cause any harm anyway. Consequently, if you are over 80, you will not be able to book a PSA test directly on-line with PCaSO.

PCaSO age criterion for PSA testing is 40 to 80. If you still feel you want to have a PSA test, then we advise you to contact your GP for advice.

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