Can I have the test at any time?
Under the NHS it is only recommended for men over 50.
You should avoid any vigorous exercise or ejaculation for 48 hours before the test.
If you are at special risk (have a family history of prostate or breast cancer, faulty BRCA gene, or are African-Caribbean), we suggest having the test at age 45.

If cancer is diagnosed
Don’t panic! Many cancers are low grade and may never cause problems. Such cancers are just regularly monitored – called Active Surveillance. If it is found to be more serious, then treatment such as surgery or radiotherapy is advised. Your cancer may well be cured by such treatment.

Have you some concerns about the test?
The main concerns of some medical practitioners are
1. it is inaccurate and
2. it risks over-treatment.

However, the PSA test alone is never used to diagnose but simply to help identify men at increased risk of prostate cancer.

Those found to have low risk disease are put on Active Surveillance. Only those found to have a more aggressive cancer are offered treatment.

Yes, some treatments may have implications with sexual and/or bladder function, but many men may prefer this to being one of the 10,000 men who die in the UK each year of the disease.*

* (The European Randomised study of Screening for Prostate Cancer with over 160,000 men has shown a greater than 50% improvement in survival in patients screened over a period of 14 years.)

Professor Roger Kirby, MA, MD, FRCS (Urol) FEBU (The Prostate Centre, London)
“Every man should know his numbers and be fully informed. A high PSA level doesn’t mean you’ve got prostate cancer, but you know you’ve got a problem in the prostate.”

Professor Christopher G. Eden, MBBS, MS, FRCS (Urol) (Royal Surrey County Hospital):
“PSA testing remains the only reliable way of identifying men at increased risk of harbouring prostate cancer who have no symptoms of it.”

Mr John Davies, MB, MS, FRCP, FRCS (Urol) (Royal Surrey County Hospital):
“The cautious option of regular PSA checks is the only way to save lives. Just ask any of the relatives and friends of the 10,000 men who die of it each year.”

Here to help
PCaSO Prostate Cancer Support Organisation is your point of contact for advice and support if you live in Sussex, Hampshire or Dorset. We are an entirely volunteer patient-run charity with over 1,000 members.

Ask for our acclaimed Prostate Cancer Information Booklet if you need further information.

Website: www.pcaso.org
Email: info@pcaso.org
National helpline number: 0800 035 5302
Postal address: PO Box 66, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7ZP

Our Medical Advisers:
Prof. Christopher G. Eden, MS, FRCS (Urol.)
(Royal Surrey County Hospital)
Dr Chris Parker, BA, MD, MRCP, FRCR
(Royal Marsden Hospital and Institute of Cancer Research)
Dr Angus Robinson, MBBS, MRCP, FRCR
(Royal Sussex County Hospital)

Registered Charity No: 1170536
What is PSA?
PSA stands for **Prostate Specific Antigen**. It is a protein found mainly in the prostate gland which naturally leaks out into the bloodstream with age. Its level can give you an indication of a possible problem with the prostate.

How is it measured?
It is measured by a blood test. The blood is taken from a vein in the arm by a phlebotomist (a person trained to take blood samples from a patient). This is called a **venous blood test**. It is then sent to a laboratory for testing. The result is usually available in about a week.

A newer way is by a tiny blood sample taken from the finger or thumb. The sample is inserted into a small machine with the result available in a few minutes.

These machines, not normally available at your GP surgery, can only give an indication of the PSA level. The more complex laboratory tests may therefore give a more accurate result. However, particularly at lower levels, the finger sample has generally been shown to provide reliable results.

What does it tell me?
- The PSA test is **NOT a test to diagnose prostate cancer**.
- If the PSA level is raised, it may simply give an indication of a possible problem with the prostate, such as prostate enlargement, infection or cancer.
- The rate at which the PSA level increases over time may give the doctor a better indication of a problem with the prostate.
- So monitoring the PSA level regularly is a more reliable indicator than a one-off test.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the test?
- The PSA test is currently the best method of identifying increased risk of prostate cancer in men without symptoms.
- It can lead to an early indication of a cancer at a potentially curable stage.
- It may reassure you.
- **However:**
  - Typically two out of three men with a raised PSA may not have cancer.
  - A definitive diagnosis requires an MRI scan and a biopsy of the prostate.
  - A raised PSA may therefore lead to invasive tests which may later prove to have been unnecessary.
  - In rare cases the reading may be normal when cancer is present, as some forms of prostate cancer do not make PSA.

What are the normal levels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Less than 2.0 ng/ml</th>
<th>2.0 - 3.0</th>
<th>3.0 - 4.0</th>
<th>4.0 - 5.0</th>
<th>5.0 - 6.0</th>
<th>Over 6.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Slightly raised</td>
<td>Possible concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Slightly raised</td>
<td>Possible concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Slightly raised</td>
<td>Possible concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 +</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Slightly raised</td>
<td>Possible concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your rights
If, after considering the pros and cons, you decide to have the test, you should ask your GP for one. It is your right to have the test. The Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP) of 2009 issued to all GPs states:

"Any man over the age of 50 who asks for a PSA test after careful consideration of the implications should be given one.”

Furthermore, a letter from the Chief Medical Officer sent to all GPs from the Department of Health (2009) states:

"Men are entitled to have a PSA test free on the NHS provided they have made an informed choice based on the PCRMP materials and a GP consultation.”

Knowing your result
It is important that you know the actual result. You are advised to keep a record of the figures from each test in order to check for any abnormal rise.

PSA rises naturally with age. The following levels are generally considered normal:

- **Under 50** ........... Less than 2.0 ng/ml*
- **50 - 59** ............ Less than 3.0 ng/ml
- **60 - 69** ............ Less than 4.0 ng/ml
- **70 and over** ....... Less than 5.0 ng/ml

*PSA is measured in nanograms per millilitre – ng/ml.

If your result is raised, your GP may wish to give you a Digital Rectal Examination (DRE for short) which may provide further information. If there is cause for concern, you will be referred to a urologist at your local hospital, who may decide to give you further tests to identify the cause.