



Getting checked for Prostate Cancer

Quick guide for men and their families and whānau



Stay well for your family and whānau.

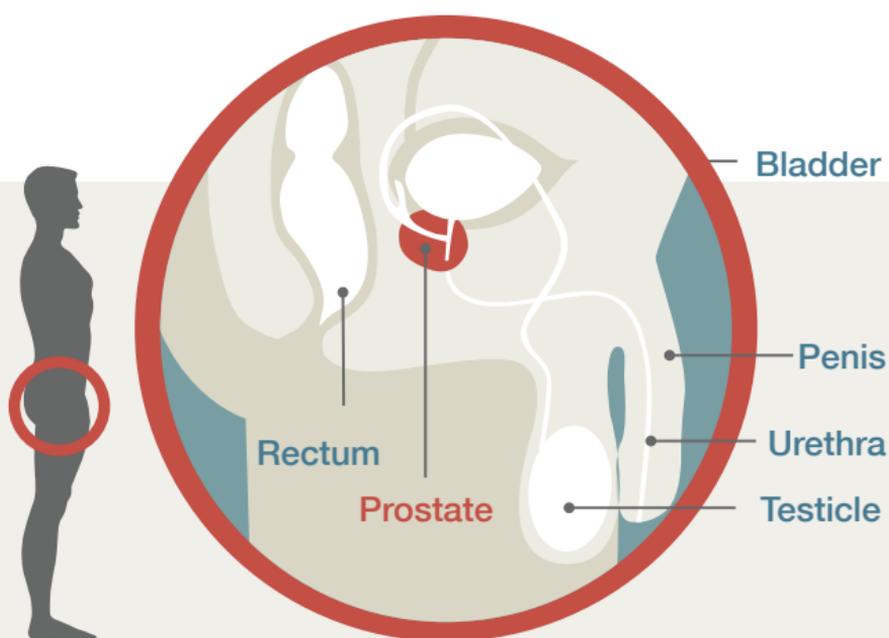
This leaflet encourages you to talk to your doctor, nurse or health professional about prostate cancer. You should do this from the age of 50, or from 40 years if you have a brother or father with prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in New Zealand men. Some prostate cancers are slow growing and will never cause problems. Others grow quickly and cause serious symptoms or death. If caught early, prostate cancer can be managed well and can usually be cured.

What is the prostate?

All men have a prostate. The prostate is a small walnut-shaped gland that surrounds the bladder opening. The prostate produces some of the fluid in semen.

From the age of 50, the prostate gland often increases in size. This can cause problems when men urinate (pee).



What is prostate cancer?

It is cancer of the prostate gland. While some prostate cancers grow slowly, others can grow rapidly or spread to other areas, such as the bones, liver and lungs.

How common is prostate cancer?

In New Zealand, about 3000 new cases are found each year and more than 600 men die.

Māori men are more likely than non-Māori men to die from prostate cancer because the cancer is often found too late to cure.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Early prostate cancer causes no symptoms. As the cancer grows, it can cause symptoms such as peeing more often, trouble starting or stopping and often getting up at night to pee.

These symptoms may not be caused by prostate cancer – but it's important to get them checked by your doctor straight away.

If the cancer has spread outside the prostate gland, it can cause pain in the lower back, hips or ribs.



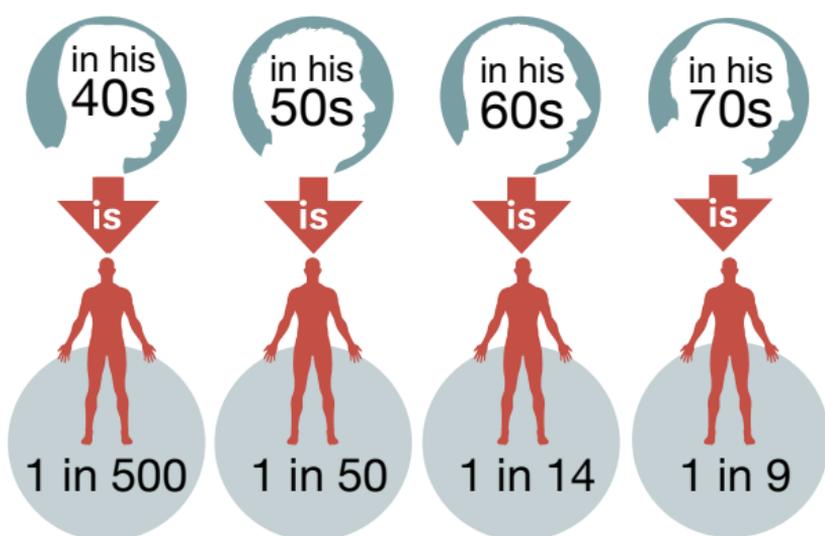
What is my risk of prostate cancer?

Your risk of prostate cancer increases as you get older and also if your brother or father has had it.

Age

Prostate cancer is more common as men get older. It is rare in men aged under 50.

The prostate cancer risk for a man ...



Men who get prostate cancer before the age of 70 are more likely to need treatment. This is because younger men will live with their cancer for longer and there is more time for it to progress and cause problems. So it's important for younger men to talk to their doctor, nurse or health professional about their risk of prostate cancer.

Close relatives

Men with a father or brother with prostate cancer are more than twice as likely to develop it. Talk to your doctor, nurse or health professional about your prostate cancer risk.

Have any of your close relatives had prostate cancer?

How can I reduce my risk of dying from prostate cancer?

You can reduce your risk of dying from prostate cancer by:

- finding the cancer early
- having a healthy lifestyle.

Checking your risk of prostate cancer

Having a prostate check is your decision.

It won't tell you if you have prostate cancer.

The check assesses your risk of having it.

The check will tell you how likely you are to have prostate cancer.

Checks usually involve a blood test – called a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, and a digital rectal examination (DRE).

The prostate-specific antigen test

This measures the level of PSA in your blood.

The prostate gland makes PSA.

Higher than normal levels of PSA can be caused by an infection of the prostate gland, by an enlarged prostate (not cancer) or by prostate cancer.

Most men with a higher than normal PSA level won't have prostate cancer. However, your overall risk of having prostate cancer is higher if you have a higher level of PSA than normal.

Digital rectal examination

This is a quick way for your doctor to check for prostate problems.

To feel the surface of your prostate, the doctor will place a gloved finger into your rectum (bottom). You are more likely to have prostate cancer if your prostate feels rough, hard or irregular.

Remember:

- some men with prostate cancer will still have normal PSA levels
- some DRE may not find very small cancers.

Tests to confirm prostate cancer

Your doctor will discuss your prostate check results with you. If the results indicate that you have a higher risk of prostate cancer, your doctor will refer you to a specialist.

The specialist will discuss having a biopsy – which is a test that looks at a sample of your prostate cells. A biopsy is needed to confirm if you have cancer.

Prostate cancer that is found early can usually be cured. If cancer is found, your specialist will discuss treatment options with you, including the risks and benefits of each option.

For more information about prostate cancer checks, tests and treatments, see the booklet Prostate Cancer: More Information.



Prostate checklist for men

Choosing whether to have a prostate check is an important decision. You need to have enough information to make the decision that is right for you and your loved ones.

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the following, talk to your doctor, nurse or health professional.

	Yes/No
I am peeing more often.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I pee, I have trouble getting started or stopping.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have poor urine flow or dribbling.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often get up at night to pee.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have blood in my urine.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have pain in my lower back, hips or ribs.*	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a family history of prostate cancer and I'm 40 years old or more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am 50 to 70 years old.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am concerned or want to know more.	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Answering yes to any of these points may not mean you have cancer but **you should get them checked by your doctor, nurse or health professional straight away.**

More information

More information on prostate cancer checks, tests and treatment is available from:

- your doctor or health service
- the booklet *Prostate Cancer: More Information* (available from your doctor, health service or the Ministry of Health)
- the Cancer Society of New Zealand Information Service (Freephone 0800 226 237)
- the Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand (Freephone 0800 477 678).

Useful websites include:

- The Cancer Society of New Zealand www.cancernz.org.nz
- Get the Tools – the Nuts and Bolts of Men’s Health www.getthetools.org.nz
- The Prostate Cancer Foundation www.prostate.org.nz
- The Ministry of Health www.health.govt.nz

To order more copies of this leaflet go to www.healthed.govt.nz.

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