

# Ask *the* Expert

## *Prostate Cancer Screenings: What is a PSA?*

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is a protein produced only in the prostate. It can be detected in a blood test and reflects the general health of the prostate. It can be elevated by prostate infections, prostate enlargement or prostate cancer.

A normal PSA level does not mean you can't have prostate cancer. Likewise, an elevated PSA does not mean you do have prostate cancer.

The Prostate Cancer screening is done by performing annual prostate exams and a PSA blood test. The latest American Urological Association guidelines released in May

of 2013, consider PSA screening to be an option for men between the ages of 40 and 69. The greatest benefit appears to be in men between the ages of 55 and 69. However, if you are African American or have a family history of prostate cancer, screening may be appropriate beginning at age 40. A few older males with a longer life expectancy may benefit from screening until age 79 or older. The decision to proceed with PSA screening should weigh the risks and benefits of doing so and should be made after first discussing it with your doctor.

### **How common is prostate cancer and who is at the highest risk?**

According to the Prostate Cancer Foundation, prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer in America, affecting 1 in 6 men. One new case occurs every 2.2 minutes and a man

dies from prostate cancer every 17.5 minutes. In addition, a man is 35% more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than a woman is to be diagnosed with breast cancer.

Higher risk factors include:

- Age - as men grow older, they are more susceptible to developing prostate cancer. Only 1 in 10,000 under age 40 will be diagnosed, the rate shoots up to 1 in 38 for ages 40 to 59, and 1 in 14 for ages 60 to 69
- Race - African American men are at higher risk (56% more likely than Caucasian race to develop prostate cancer)
- Family History

### **What can be done to help prevent and/or aid in the early detection of prostate cancer?**

Because the symptoms of prostate cancer are

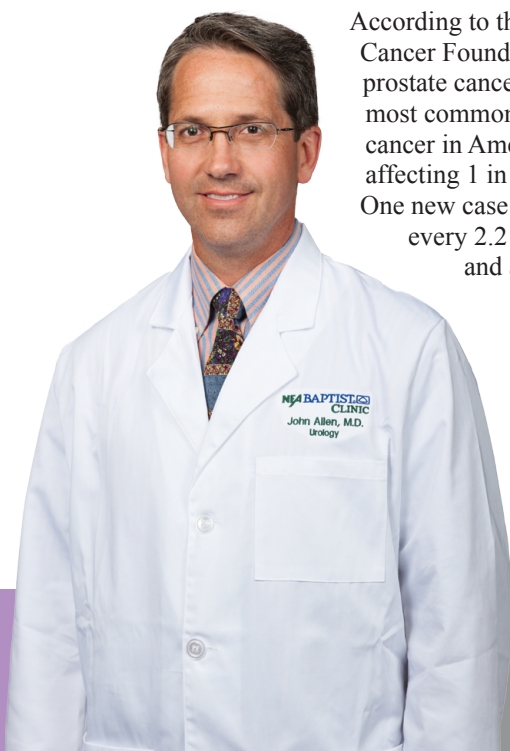
similar to other diseases or conditions, men who experience a combination of these particular symptoms will undergo a full work up to eliminate any possible contributors to the symptoms.

### **Are there any symptoms or warning signs?**

If the cancer is caught at its earliest stages, most men will not experience any symptoms. Some men, however, will experience symptoms such as frequent, hesitant, or burning urination, difficulty in having an erection, or pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips or upper thighs.

### **Can prostate cancer be cured?**

Because approximately 90% of all prostate cancers are detected in the local and regional stages, the cure rate for prostate cancer is very high.



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