

Don't wait - Check your prostate

Importance of men having regular prostate checks with their GP

If you are a man in your 40s, 50s or 60s, you should have regular prostate checks with your doctor. An annual prostate health check, including a PSA blood test, could mean the difference between a life led free of prostate cancer or ongoing cancer treatments and potentially a premature death.

Prostate cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in New Zealand. One in eight men will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime, with around 4,500 diagnosed every year. It is the second highest cause of cancer death in men after lung cancer, and the third highest for men and women (behind lung and bowel cancers). Around 740 men die on average every year from prostate cancer. More men die from prostate cancer annually than women die from breast cancer. Most prostate cancer deaths arise because the cancer is detected only when the cancer is already relatively advanced.

Prostate cancer can develop quietly. It might not cause any symptoms as it develops, only making itself apparent once it has already progressed to a serious stage. If detected early, it can be cured. However, if prostate cancer is discovered once advanced, and has already spread outside the prostate, then it can become a serious threat to a man's length and quality of life. Once prostate cancer has spread to distant parts of the body, then treatment options are significantly reduced and it can become terminal.

The check for signs of prostate cancer is a simple blood test, sometimes accompanied by a physical examination. The blood test identifies the level of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) produced by the prostate. An elevated PSA need not necessarily indicate prostate cancer, but provides an alert for further investigation.

It is therefore essential that men in their 40s, 50s and 60s are *proactive* in seeing their doctor for an annual visit, including a check for possible signs of prostate cancer. We take our cars in for an annual WOF to keep us safe and our vehicle running well. If you are a man in your 40s, 50s or 60s, and particularly if you have a family history of prostate cancer, you should take the same approach to yourself: be *proactive* and have an annual prostate health check with your doctor.

Visit <https://prostate.org.nz/> or call 0800 66 0800 for more information.

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