



UK NSC prostate cancer screening recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend universal screening for prostate cancer.

The UK NSC has approved a risk management programme to ensure men are given balanced information about the potential harms of testing for prostate cancer. For further information, please visit: www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/prostate

- Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. It is responsible for 25% of newly diagnosed cases of cancer in England and Wales and 34,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Most cases develop in men aged 65 or older.
- Because many forms of prostate cancer are benign (will not cause any harm) and some of the treatments carry major side effects, doctors often recommend a policy of “watchful waiting” for patients with a diagnosis and only treat if the cancer is at risk of spreading.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

- The test for prostate cancer is not effective enough and does not identify a large proportion of men who in fact have prostate cancer.
- A positive test will lead in most cases to a biopsy, which often does not give a definitive answer and leads to anxiety and to further investigations.
- Current research indicates for every 100,000 men at age 50 offered screening, 748 would end up being treated. The men accepting screening would have their lives extended on average by a day – while 274 men would be made impotent, 25 incontinent and 17 would have rectal problems as a result of the treatment.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC’s prostate cancer recommendation, please visit:

www.screening.nhs.uk/prostatecancer

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is chaired by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, advises Ministers and the NHS in the four UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes. Using research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation, it assesses the evidence for programmes against a set of internationally recognised criteria covering the condition, the test, the treatment options and the effectiveness and acceptability of the screening programme. Assessing programmes in this way is intended to ensure that they do more good than harm at a reasonable cost. The UK NSC also sets up practical mechanisms to oversee the introduction of new programmes in the English NHS and monitors effectiveness and quality of these programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.screening.nhs.uk. The UK NSC’s policy review process is described at www.screening.nhs.uk/policyreview and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at www.screening.nhs.uk/policies

The UK NSC is supported by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).