Prostate Cancer News

Talk to your doc before ruling out screening.

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Previous guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended against routine screening for prostate cancer because of risks linked with additional testing and treatment. But recently, this independent panel of public health experts updated its advice to urge all men between ages 55 and 69 to discuss the benefits and harms of this procedure with their doctors before making a decision.

This is because new findings show that checking for prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, a protein produced by cancer cells, could prevent one to two deaths among men in this age group for every 1,000 individuals tested. In addition, the screening could help stop the cancer from spreading throughout the prostate gland.

Currently, Medicare and private health insurers cover these annual screenings for all men age 50 and older. But the test isn't very specific for cancer, which means plenty of false positives occur. Still, in some cases, PSA screenings have saved lives.

For African-American men, who are twice as likely to develop prostate cancer and die of this illness, these screenings may be key. But the task force suggests that if men decide to get screened, doing so just once every two to four years should be enough.

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