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Home Illnesses and conditions Cancer Cancer types in adults Prostate cancer Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men and anyone with a prostate in the UK. Prostate cancer usually develops slowly, so there may be no signs you have it for many years. Symptoms often only become apparent when your prostate is large enough to affect the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the penis). When this happens, you may notice things like an increased need to urinate, straining while urinating and a feeling that your bladder has not fully emptied. These symptoms shouldn’t be ignored, but they do not mean you definitely have prostate cancer. It is more likely that they are caused by something else, such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (also known as BPH or prostate enlargement). Read more about the symptoms of prostate cancer The prostate is a small gland in the pelvis. About the size of a satsuma, it’s located between the penis and the bladder and surrounds the urethra. The main function of the prostate is to help in the production of semen. It produces a thick white fluid that is mixed with the sperm produced by the testicles, to create semen. The causes of prostate cancer are largely unknown. However, certain things can increase your risk of developing the condition. The chances of developing prostate cancer increase as you get older. Most cases develop in men and anyone with a prostate aged 50 or older. For reasons not yet understood, prostate cancer is more common in men and anyone with a prostate of African-Caribbean African descent. It’s less common in men and anyone with a prostate of Asian descent. Men and anyone with a prostate who have first-degree male relatives (such as a father or brother) affected by prostate cancer are also at a slightly increased risk. Read more about the causes of prostate cancer There is no single test for prostate cancer. All the tests used to help diagnose the condition have benefits and risks, which your doctor should discuss with you. The most commonly used tests for prostate cancer are blood tests, a physical examination of your prostate (known as a digital rectal examination or DRE) and a biopsy. The blood test, known as a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, measures the level of PSA and may help detect early prostate cancer. Men and anyone with a prostate are not routinely offered PSA tests to screen for prostate cancer, as results can be unreliable. This is because the PSA blood test is not specific to prostate cancer. PSA can be raised due to a large non-cancerous growth of the prostate (BPH), a urinary tract infection or inflammation of the prostate, as well as prostate cancer. Raised PSA levels also cannot tell a doctor whether a man has life-threatening prostate cancer or not. This means a raised PSA can lead to unnecessary tests and treatment.