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## PROSTATE CANCER AND TESTING

The prostate gland is approximately the size and shape of a walnut. It surrounds the upper part of the urethra. The prostate produces most of the semen in which sperm travels. As men age, the cells of the prostate may change to form tumors or other growths. Some growths may be benign (not cancerous), other growths may be cancerous.

- **Benign Growths (non-cancerous).** As men age, the prostate may grow larger, this is known as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). BPH occurs when extra prostate tissue squeezes the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder) causing symptoms such as difficulty urinating. BPH does NOT lead to cancer.
- **Cancer.** Prostate cancer occurs when abnormal prostate cells grow uncontrolled and start to invade other tissue. Some tumors can be felt during a physical exam, others cannot.

Screening for prostate cancer can help to catch cancer in its early stage. Regular screening should begin by age 50. Screening tests often include:

- **DRE (digital rectal exam).** Because the prostate is next to the rectum, many prostate problems can be found with this exam.
- **PSA test.** PSA is a protein produced by prostate tissue. Your PSA level can be measured with a blood test. A high or rising PSA level may suggest that you have prostate cancer, although several factors can affect PSA levels. A high PSA level does not always mean cancer. More tests may need to be done.

Your doctor may suggest that you have a prostate biopsy done. A biopsy is performed in the doctor's office by taking small samples of tissue from the prostate. You will be given a local pain killer and an ultrasound is used to help guide a needle to the correct place in the prostate. These tissue samples are then sent to a laboratory for the presence of cancer cells.

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