

Prostate cancer lifetime risk trebles in 25 years

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Boys born in 2015 will have almost three times the risk of being diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point during their lives than those born in 1990.

Latest figures from Cancer Research UK show that the [lifetime risk](#) of prostate cancer will rise from five per cent (1 in 20) for boys born in 1990 to just over 14 per cent (1 in 7) for boys born in 2015.

This is largely due to increased use of the [Prostate Specific Antigen Test \(PSA\)](#). This test detects a wide variety of prostate cancers, including those which will never be life-threatening, as well as aggressive forms of the disease, but unfortunately, it does not distinguish between the two.

PSA testing has rapidly boosted the number of [men](#) being diagnosed with the disease. Today, around 41,000 men per year are diagnosed with prostate cancer in the UK – up from around 15,000 men per year 25 years ago.

But the rise in prostate cancer diagnoses isn't just because of increased testing. Higher numbers of prostate cancer cases are also due to more men living to an older age, when the disease is most likely to develop.

The good news is that [death rates](#) from prostate

cancer in the UK are 18 per cent lower than they were 20 years ago. This is likely to be because of improved treatments and [PSA tests](#) which can help diagnose cancers earlier, when the chances of [survival](#) are greater. Today, around 10,700 men die each year from prostate cancer in the UK.

Research has led to more widespread and earlier use of hormone treatments prescribed since the early 1990s. More recently, a range of new hormone treatments have been developed to prolong life – such as [abiraterone which was approved by NICE in May 2012](#) to treat patients with advanced disease, and which is a drug which Cancer Research UK scientists helped to develop.

Professor Malcolm Mason, Cancer Research UK's prostate cancer expert, said: "We're detecting more cases of prostate cancer than ever before. And we're carrying out an intensive amount of research to find better methods than PSA to distinguish between the minority of cases that are life threatening and do need treatment – the vipers – from the majority of cases that don't – the grass snakes. But there is much more to be done.

"Targeting the tests at men who have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer might be a better approach than screening all men. Research has already saved lives from [prostate cancer](#). But there is uncertainty over the best approach to treating some forms of the disease. Surgery and radiotherapy - with their potential side effects – is one option, to be balanced against the option of careful monitoring with regular checkups."

Cancer Research UK's scientists have carried out research that suggests a protein called MSMB (Beta-microseminoprotein) may be better at identifying men at higher risk of developing the disease. But more work is needed to prove if this test could be useful.

Dr Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief

executive, said: "Thanks to people's generosity, our world-class scientists are leading the way to understand why some cancers are aggressive and others aren't. We need to build on the great progress already made and develop more targeted treatments for those men whose disease is life-threatening. We also need to develop better tests that will help us to know when to leave harmless forms of the disease alone."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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