

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

Written by James Morning Special to the NNPA from the San Diego Voice & Viewpoint
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Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men, striking over 200,000 men each year. African-American men are at the highest risk.

Every year, about 30,000 men die of this disease, making it the second deadliest cancer in men. Caught early, prostate cancer can be treated, usually successfully. But because many men experience no symptoms, it is often identified only by an abnormal result on a basic prostate cancer screening.

For the last 20 years, doctors have had a powerful weapon in their arsenal for detecting prostate cancer. In addition to the DRE (a physical exam allowing the doctor to feel the prostate), patients can also have a simple blood test called a PSA, which will detect a majority of prostate problems early. In the two decades that the PSA has been used, prostate cancer deaths have declined, and the number of successfully treated prostate cancer cases has risen.

During September, Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, Men's Health Network is urging men to talk to their health care providers about prostate cancer, and to consider screening at age 50, and at age 40 for African Americans and men with a family history of prostate cancer. The group also encourages women to get involved and urge their husbands to ask their health care provider about a prostate screening, including a PSA test.

If you are on Medicare, prostate cancer screening is a part of your Welcome to Medicare physical, the free comprehensive physical exam you receive in your first year of eligibility. For younger men, 36 states require that insurance companies offering health insurance provide coverage for prostate cancer tests. Insurance companies may offer prostate cancer screening in the remaining states, but are not required to do so.

The bottom line? Having an annual prostate exam, including a PSA test, just might save your life. No matter what age you are, that annual PSA test creates a benchmark against which to judge future tests.

When you receive your PSA test results, ask your health care provider what your PSA number is, write it down, and compare it against future tests. If the number goes up in future tests, talk to your doctor.

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. It's the perfect time to call your health care provider, schedule an appointment, and get your prostate cancer test done. Then, talk to your health care provider and determine what screening and treatment options are best for you and

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your family.

To learn more about the prostate and prostate cancer, go to www.pcaawareness.com .