I'm not a robot

Things to do before a prostate exam

A prostate exam typically involves a digital rectal examination (DRE). During a DRE, a doctor feels the prostate gland by inserting a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum. This examination does not require the rectum to be empty. Prostate exams are a typical part of an annual physical for males. They can help detect prostate issues such as enlarged prostate or prostate cancer.Unlike a colonoscopy, a prostate exam or DRE does not require preparation. The rectum does not need to be empty for this routine examination. This article takes a closer look at whether or not someone needs to poop before a prostate exam.Share on PinterestMoMo Productions/Getty ImagesIt is unnecessary to poop before a prostate exam. However, some people may choose to do so for personal comfort. The main purpose of a prostate exam, specifically a DRE, is to feel the prostate gland for any abnormalities. This procedure does not require an empty rectum.However, if having a bowel movement beforehand makes a person feel more comfortable and at ease, it is fine to do so. People should be as relaxed as possible during the exam for comfort and ease of examination. If someone feels the urge to poop during a prostate exam, they can inform the healthcare professional performing the exam. This is a natural response, as a DRE can make individuals feel like they need to have a bowel movement.Healthcare professionals understand that this can happen. They may pause the examination to allow the person to use the restroom, or they might provide guidance on how to relax and reduce the urge to go.Preparing for a prostate exam is relatively straightforward. There are typically no special instructions for someone to follow unless a doctor directs. The following may help a person prepare for their appointment and prostate exam:Learn about the procedure: Knowing what to expect may help alleviate anxiety.Discuss concerns and medications: Before the exam, people can ask any questions or raise concerns they may have with the doctor. They should also advise them of any medications they are taking.Eat as usual: There is no need to eat a special diet before a DRE. People can eat and drink as they usually would unless a doctor recommends otherwise.Arrive early: People can arrive a bit early for the appointment to fill out any necessary paperwork and to have a moment to relax before the exam.Prostate exams involve the following:Preparation: The healthcare professional will usually ask the person to undress from the waist down and give them a gown for comfort and privacy.Positioning: The person may need to stand and bend forward at the waist, lie on their side with knees drawn up to the chest, or lie on an examination table in the fetal position.Glove and lubrication: The healthcare professional will wear a glove and apply lubricant to their finger.Insertion of finger: The healthcare professional gently inserts the lubricated, gloved finger into the rectum.Examination of the prostate: The healthcare professional feels the prostate, which is located just in front of the rectum, for any abnormalities in size, shape, or texture.Duration: The examination is usually brief.Discussion: After the exam, the healthcare professional may discuss any findings and next steps, such as further testing if necessary.Most people report feeling a sensation of pressure rather than pain during a DRE. The pressure on the prostate can create a sensation similar to the need to urinate or have a bowel movement. Some people may experience discomfort, especially if there is an existing issue such as an enlarged prostate or prostatitis. The discomfort or unusual sensations are typically brief, as the exam is short.A prostate exam is a quick and safe procedure with minimal after-effects. Rarely, there may be a small amount of bleeding from the rectum, especially if a person has hemorrhoids or anal fissures. This is usually not a cause for concern. However, people need to report persistent bleeding to a healthcare professional.Feelings of embarrassment or anxiety related to the exam are common but typically fade quickly.Males with an average risk of prostate cancer need to consider screening starting at age 50. Men at higher risk, including African American males and those with a family history of prostate cancer, need to consider earlier screening at around age 40–45.Different health organizations have slightly varying guidelines. If the results are typical, the healthcare professional may recommend routine follow-up screenings at intervals according to age, risk factors, and medical history. Continued monitoring often includes annual or biennial PSA tests and DREs.A suspicious lump on DRE does not always mean cancer. It could also be due to an enlarged prostate (known as benign prostatic hyperplasia), inflammation, infection, or other noncancerous conditions. If a person's DRE results are atypical, their doctor may refer them for further diagnostic tests.It is not medically necessary to have a bowel movement before a prostate exam. The rectum does not need to be empty for the exam. Some people might prefer to empty their bowels beforehand for personal comfort, but this comes from individual preference rather than a medical need. Healthcare professionals can perform the exam effectively whether or not a person has had a bowel movement.Prostate / Prostate Cancer A prostate exam typically involves a digital rectal examination (DRE). During a DRE, a doctor feels the prostate gland by inserting a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum. This examination does not require the rectum to be empty. Prostate exams are a typical part of an annual physical for males. They can help detect prostate issues such as enlarged prostate or prostate cancer.Unlike a colonoscopy, a prostate exam or DRE does not require preparation. The rectum does not need to be empty for this routine examination. This article takes a closer look at whether or not someone needs to poop before a prostate exam.Share on PinterestMoMo Productions/Getty ImagesIt is unnecessary to poop before a prostate exam. However, some people may choose to do so for personal comfort. The main purpose of a prostate exam, specifically a DRE, is to feel the prostate gland for any abnormalities. This procedure does not require an empty rectum.However, if having a bowel movement beforehand makes a person feel more comfortable and at ease, it is fine to do so. People should be as relaxed as possible during the exam for comfort and ease of examination. If someone feels the urge to poop during a prostate exam, they can inform the healthcare professional performing the exam. This is a natural response, as a DRE can make individuals feel like they need to have a bowel movement.Healthcare professionals understand that this can happen. 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Some people might prefer to empty their bowels beforehand for personal comfort, but this comes from individual preference rather than a medical need. Healthcare professionals can perform the exam effectively whether or not a person has had a bowel movement.Prostate / Prostate Cancer Published: February 6, 2024 | Updated: May 21, 2024 Read Time: 5 minutes Your annual checkup invariably involves getting some orifices probed. An otoscope gets shoved in your ear, a wooden depressor flattens your tongue. But the internal invasion most middle-aged men dread most is preceded by the snapping of the doctor's latex gloves: A prostate exam. Don't worry—It's normal to stress a little about the test. So here's what to expect, when you should get one, and how prepare for a prostate exam. Plus, answers to the questions you're too embarrassed to ask your friends (like, Should I poop before a prostate exam?) Getting the walnut-sized gland probed—technically called a digital rectal exam or DRE— is one of two screenings doctors use to detect prostate cancer, the most common cancer in men after skin cancer, says urologist Wagner Baptiste, M.D. DREs are typically done in tandem with a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test, a blood test that measures how much PSA is in your blood. The DRE is less effective at finding cancer than the PSA, according to the American Cancer Society. That's largely because cancer can arise in parts of the prostate where your doctor's finger can't reach due to tissue interference, says Baptiste. But it can help detect tumors in men with a normal PSA level. There's some debate among experts when it comes to screening age, says Baptiste. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends that average-risk men start at 45. But the American Urological Association (AUA) advises starting at 55. This recommendation appears to be based on the youngest age in two large trials that were first to report results. The caveats: If you have a family history of prostate cancer or if you're African-American—both of which increase your risk of prostate cancer—you should talk with your doctor about starting a prostate exam at age 40. You should also ask about beginning testing at 40 if you have a family history of breast (male or female) cancer or ovarian cancer. In many cases that's due to inheriting a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation (you can get a blood test to see if you have these genes). A BRCA1 mutation may increase your risk of prostate cancer by seven to 25 percent, and BRCA2 mutation may raise your risk by 20 to 60 percent, according to some sources. Digital rectal exams are literally the butt of all prostate exam jokes. During the test, your doctor will digitally probe your prostate to search for abnormalities. "You'll drop your pants and slightly bend your knees to start," Baptiste says. "Your doctor will put their hands on your belly and insert a lubricated, gloved index finger into your rectum. They'll swipe their finger from left to right and move from bottom to top on your prostate looking for any lumps that may indicate prostate cancer." The exam isn't painful, but you'll feel some pressure when your doctor pushes on your prostate, Baptiste says. There are no risks to the procedure, which only takes around a minute. You can, but don't force it if you don't need to move your bowels, Baptiste says. "There's no specific bowel prep necessary," says Baptiste. "It's common for poop to appear during the exam, but your doctor is used to it and knows what they're doing and knows where your rectal wall lies to move feces out of the way." Let your doctor know if you have existing conditions including hemorrhoids or anal fissures or tears before your exam. This is a test best left to the experts, says Baptiste. This blood test measures the amount of prostate specific antigen—a protein that is produced by both normal and malignant prostate gland cells—in your blood. Higher PSA levels may indicate prostate cancer, but a PSA test is used to determine if further testing, including a biopsy, is needed. Avoid sex and masturbation, and don't cycle, horseback ride, or perform strenuous exercise three days before the test, Baptiste says. "These activities can elevate your PSA levels and make it difficult to interpret your results," he says. Your doctor will likely order a second test to confirm the findings, says Baptiste. "There are a lot of pre-test conditions to consider that can influence a high PSA test including sex and masturbation or intense exercise, so you want to rule those out," says Baptiste. Your doctor will review your results and determine if further testing is needed. "Your physician may request an MRI to get a more detailed picture of your prostate," says Baptiste. "The scan can reveal suspicious area(s) that can be targeted during your biopsy, which is required to diagnose prostate cancer." After your first exam, make an appointment every other year, Baptiste says. "If you're someone at higher risk, including a family history of prostate cancer, your doctor may suggest getting checked yearly," he says. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, after skin cancer. A prostate exam is an important screening to start at 55—or earlier if you have a family history or other at-risk factors—to potentially catch and treat prostate cancer early. Facing your first prostate exam can feel like venturing into the unknown. For many men over 50, the very thought might seem intimidating, but understanding the process can transform anxiety into empowerment. This guide is here to walk you through each step, ensuring you're well-prepared and informed. From understanding what the exam entails to hearing personal testimonies, we'll cover everything you need to feel ready and at ease. Ever wondered just how pivotal a simple exam could be to your long-term health? It's time to delve into the details and find out. Key Takeaways Understand what a prostate exam involves and why it's crucial for men over 50 Learn how early detection can significantly impact your health outcomes Familiarize yourself with the screening process to alleviate any apprehensions Discover practical tips for preparing for your exam Gain insights from personal experiences to feel more reassured and motivated What is a Prostate Exam? A prostate exam is an essential procedure for men over 50, designed to assess the health of your prostate gland by checking for any abnormalities, such as an enlarged prostate. Doctors often include this exam as part of routine health check-ups to ensure early detection of potential issues. The exam usually involves a digital rectal exam (DRE) or a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. Your healthcare provider can explain these methods and help determine which is most suitable for you. During a digital rectal exam, a doctor will gently insert a lubricated, gloved finger into the rectum to feel the prostate gland for any lumps or abnormalities. This quick and straightforward test can provide valuable insights into your prostate health. Meanwhile, the PSA blood test measures the level of prostate-specific antigen in your blood. Elevated PSA levels can indicate prostate issues, but they aren't definitive proof of cancer. Understanding these procedures can ease any anxiety and help you prepare mentally. It's essential to know that a prostate exam is a proactive step. By regularly checking for abnormalities, you can catch potential problems early, when they're often easier to treat. This knowledge serves as a powerful tool in maintaining your health and peace of mind. While the thought of undergoing an exam might be daunting, being informed about what it entails can significantly reduce your apprehension. Why is a Prostate Exam Important? Prostate exams play a crucial role in safeguarding your health by enabling early detection of prostate issues. Identifying problems early can prevent more severe health complications down the line. Regular screenings not only enhance your likelihood of successful treatment but also improve your overall survival rates. Prostate exams are instrumental in detecting conditions like prostate cancer, which can be life-threatening if left untreated. Statistics show that prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men, but early detection through regular screenings significantly boosts treatment prognosis. By catching cancer early, you increase your chances of a full recovery, underscoring the importance of scheduling regular prostate exams. Your doctor will use the results from these screenings to monitor your prostate health over time, providing a valuable baseline for detecting any changes. Getting informed about the importance of prostate exams can motivate you to take action. By understanding the potential consequences of neglecting your prostate health, you're more likely to prioritize these exams and stay on top of your well-being. Knowledge empowers you to make informed decisions and take proactive measures to protect your health. Understanding the Screening Process The prostate screening process generally begins with a detailed discussion of your medical history. Your doctor will consider factors such as age, family history, and any specific risk factors you may have. This initial conversation helps determine the most appropriate tests for your situation and sets the stage for the screening process. Next, you're likely to undergo a digital rectal exam, where your doctor feels for any abnormalities in the prostate. This quick exam allows your doctor to assess the size and texture of your prostate gland. Although it might cause brief discomfort, it's a critical step in detecting potential issues early. Additionally, a PSA test may be performed to measure the level of prostate-specific antigen in your blood. Elevated PSA levels can suggest an increased risk of prostate problems, prompting further investigation. Understanding each step of the screening process can alleviate any uncertainties you might have. By knowing what to expect, you can approach the exam with confidence and peace of mind. Remember, these screenings are designed to protect your health and provide you with valuable insights that can guide your healthcare decisions. How to Prepare for Your Prostate Exam Preparing for your prostate exam can make the experience more comfortable and less stressful. Start by scheduling your appointment at a convenient time to minimize any disruptions to your daily routine. Choosing a time when you're least likely to feel rushed or stressed can help set a positive tone for the exam. Wearing comfortable clothing is another simple yet effective way to make the exam process easier. Opt for loose-fitting clothes that allow you to change quickly if needed. Avoid consuming heavy meals before the exam, as they may cause discomfort during the procedure. Instead, stick to light meals and stay hydrated. Before your appointment, discuss any medications you're taking with your doctor. Some medications can affect the results of your exam, so it's important to provide your doctor with a complete list. Additionally, preparing a list of questions in advance can help you make the most of your visit. These preparations ensure you're fully informed and ready for the procedure. What to Expect During the Exam Understanding what to expect during a prostate exam can ease any nervousness you might feel. Your doctor will begin by explaining each step of the procedure, ensuring you're comfortable and informed. You'll be asked to lie on your side or bend over a table, depending on the method your doctor prefers. The digital rectal exam involves the doctor gently inserting a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum to feel the prostate gland. While this might cause brief discomfort, it shouldn't be painful. The exam is quick and provides valuable information about your prostate health. If a PSA blood test is part of your screening, it'll involve a simple blood draw—an easy and routine procedure. Knowing what to expect can make the experience far less intimidating. By familiarizing yourself with the steps, you can approach the exam with confidence and a positive mindset. Remember, your doctor is there to guide you through the process and answer any questions you may have. Prostate Exam Results: What Comes Next After your prostate exam, your doctor will discuss the results with you and outline any necessary follow-up actions. If your results are normal, your doctor may recommend regular monitoring to ensure continued prostate health. This proactive approach provides peace of mind and helps detect any changes early. In some cases, abnormal results may lead to additional tests or a referral to a specialist. This step is crucial for confirming any potential issues and determining the most appropriate course of action. Understanding your results empowers you to make informed decisions about your health and explore all available options. Open communication with your healthcare provider is essential for effective follow-up. Don't hesitate to ask questions or express any concerns you may have about your results or next steps. By working closely with your doctor, you can develop a personalized plan that prioritizes your health and well-being. Personal Testimonies from Individuals Who Have Had a Prostate Exam Hearing from men who have undergone a prostate exam can provide reassurance and motivation. John, 55, recalls feeling reassured after his first exam, knowing he was taking an important step for his health. Mike, 60, shares how early detection changed his life, allowing him to tackle prostate issues head-on and maintain his quality of life. Tom, 52, emphasizes the importance of regular screenings, urging others not to delay their first exam. He believes that staying proactive about his health has made all the difference. David, 58, encourages men to prioritize their health and not let fear hold them back from scheduling their first exam. These personal experiences highlight the positive impact that prostate exams can have on your health. By hearing others' stories, you can feel more comfortable and confident about undergoing your own exam. Remember, you're not alone—many men have walked this path before and come out healthier on the other side. Frequently Asked Questions about Prostate Exams Many men wonder at what age they should begin prostate screenings. While recommendations vary, doctors generally advise starting exams at age 50. However, if you have a family history of prostate cancer or other risk factors, your doctor may recommend starting earlier. Questions about the frequency of prostate exams are also common. Typically, doctors suggest annual screenings, but your specific schedule may depend on your health and risk factors. Concerns about discomfort during the exam are understandable, but remember, any discomfort is usually brief and outweighed by the health benefits. Some men question the accuracy of PSA tests, as elevated levels can indicate various conditions, not just cancer. However, PSA tests remain a vital tool in assessing prostate health and guiding further evaluation. Understanding the answers to these questions can help alleviate fears and misconceptions, allowing you to approach your exam with confidence. Summary Prostate exams are a vital part of maintaining your health and well-being. By understanding what the exam entails, why it's important, and how to prepare, you can approach the process with confidence and peace of mind. Personal testimonies and answers to common questions provide additional reassurance and motivation. Remember, taking proactive steps for your health today can lead to a healthier tomorrow. Do you have any lingering questions or concerns about scheduling your first prostate exam? Let's discuss them and put your mind at ease. Frequently Asked Questions What should you not do before a prostate test? Avoid consuming caffeine or alcohol before a prostate test, as they can irritate the prostate and interfere with accurate results. It is also recommended to avoid strenuous exercise that may affect the prostate. What should you do before a prostate exam? Before a prostate exam, it is important to follow your healthcare provider's instructions. You may be asked to empty your bladder before the exam and wear comfortable clothing. It is also important to relax and communicate any concerns or questions you may have with your healthcare provider. What not to eat before a prostate exam? Before a prostate exam, it is best to avoid consuming spicy foods, dairy products, and foods high in fiber that may cause bloating or discomfort. It is also recommended to avoid consuming caffeinated beverages or alcohol, as they can irritate the prostate. Do men get hard during a prostate exam? It is normal for some men to experience an erection during a prostate exam, as the prostate gland is located near the nerves that control erections. However, it is important to remember that the purpose of the exam is for medical reasons only, and any physical response is a natural bodily reaction. It is recommended to communicate any discomfort or concerns with your healthcare provider during the exam. Home/Blog/Things to Do Before a Prostate Exam Blog Ehan07/07/2024Last Updated: 07/07/2024 4 2 minutes read Undergoing a prostate exam can be an essential step in maintaining your health, especially as you age. Proper preparation can make the experience more comfortable and ensure accurate results. Here's a guide on what to do before your prostate exam. Before anything else, it's crucial to understand why you need a prostate exam. Prostate exams are typically performed to: Detect prostate cancer early. Diagnose benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). Investigate symptoms such as frequent urination, weak urine stream, or pelvic discomfort. Schedule Your Appointment When you decide to have a prostate exam, scheduling your appointment is the next step. Make sure to choose a time that is convenient and allows you to be relaxed. Choose a reputable healthcare provider: Ensure your doctor is experienced in performing prostate exams. Pick a suitable date and time: Give yourself enough time before and after the appointment. Discuss Your Medical History Before the exam, your doctor will need to know your medical history, including: Family history of prostate cancer. Previous prostate issues. Current medications and supplements. Symptoms you've been experiencing. Follow Pre-Exam Instructions Your doctor might provide specific instructions to follow before the exam: Dietary restrictions: Some doctors may advise avoiding certain foods or drinks. Medication adjustments: You might need to stop taking certain medications temporarily. Stay Hydrated Drinking plenty of water before the exam can help. A full bladder might be required for certain types of prostate imaging tests. Practice Relaxation Techniques Feeling anxious before a prostate exam is normal. To reduce anxiety: Deep breathing exercises: Practice deep breathing to help calm your nerves. Meditation: Engage in meditation or mindfulness techniques. Physical activity: Light exercise can help alleviate stress. Wear Comfortable Clothing On the day of your exam, wear loose and comfortable clothing. This will help you feel more at ease during the procedure. Prepare Questions for Your Doctor Having questions ready can help you understand the process better and address any concerns you might have. Consider asking about: The procedure and what to expect. Potential risks and side effects. Follow-up steps based on the results. Arrange for Post-Exam Care Although a prostate exam is generally quick and minimally invasive, it's wise to: Take the rest of the day off: Allow yourself time to relax. Have a support person: Bring a friend or family member for moral support if needed. Follow Up on Results After your prostate exam, follow up with your doctor to discuss the results. If further tests or treatments are needed, make sure to schedule them promptly. Conclusion Preparing for a prostate exam involves understanding the procedure, following pre-exam instructions, and managing your anxiety. By taking these steps, you can ensure a smoother experience and obtain accurate results, contributing to better prostate health. Related Articles