

Prostatic biopsy

Your doctor has recommended that you have a prostatic biopsy. This document explains the procedure and aims to answer your main questions. If you have any additional questions please feel free to discuss them with your doctor before the procedure.

What is a prostatic biopsy under ultrasound?

Transrectal ultrasound-guided prostate biopsy is a procedure that is used to help diagnose prostate cancer. It involves having samples of your prostate tissue removed, which are then sent to a laboratory for testing.

You may be advised to have a prostate biopsy if you had a blood test that showed a raised level of a substance called prostate-specific antigen (PSA). PSA is made by your prostate gland and having a raised PSA level can be a sign of prostate cancer, but it's important to understand that it can also be a sign of other conditions, such as inflammation of your prostate, which is non-cancerous.

In a transrectal ultrasound-guided prostate biopsy, small samples of tissue are taken from your prostate gland. Your prostate is about the size of a walnut and lies at the base of your bladder. The back of your prostate presses against your rectum (back passage), and the front of your prostate surrounds your urethra (the tube that carries urine from your bladder and out through your penis). The procedure usually only takes about 30 minutes and you can go home afterwards.

Where is the procedure carried out?

The procedure is carried out in the Radiology department and will be performed by a specialist radiologist and nurse to assist. You will be asked to empty your bladder and get into a hospital gown.

What happens during the procedure?

You will be given intravenous antibiotic cover prior to the procedure (so as to reduce the risk of infection post biopsy), a course of oral antibiotics will be prescribed and finally at the end of the procedure an antibiotic suppository will be placed in the rectum.

You will be asked to lie on your side with knees drawn up to your chest, a special probe is lubricated with ultrasound gel and then inserted into the back passage and pictures of the prostate will be taken.

While the probe remains in place a needle is passed through the probe and local anaesthetic will be injected into the prostate. Once the anaesthetic has taken effect small pieces of prostatic tissue will be taken, usually twelve in total.

What happens after the procedure?

After the biopsy it is normal to experience some of the following symptoms:

- Burning with urination – It is normal to feel burning with urination for the first 24 hours after the biopsy. It may continue for up to three days
- Frequent urination – This will gradually improve over the next 24 to 36 hours

- Blood in the urine – It is normal to have slightly red tinged urine
- Blood in stool – You may notice some bloody streaks in your stool
- Blood in the semen

What are the risks?

Risks associated with this procedure could be infection, and should be taken seriously. Symptoms of an infection could be:

- Severe pain or pain that lasts for more than two days
- Fever, shivers and sweating
- Burning sensation when you go to the toilet, or urine starts to smell
- Rectal bleeding with clots or pure bloody stools
- Persistent bleeding lasting longer than 7 days

Aftercare advice

- You'll need to stay in hospital for at least 30 minutes after your biopsy to observe for any bleeding
- You may experience some discomfort following the biopsy. If so, taking paracetamol should alleviate the discomfort, but do not take Aspirin or anti-inflammatories unless specified by the doctor
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent blood clots and infection in the bladder
- Usually after this procedure you can resume normal activities straightaway. However, you should avoid activities which involve heavy lifting and strenuous exercise for 48 hours
- Make sure someone can take you home and someone can stay with you

Further information

If you have any concerns or further questions please contact the Radiology department on +44 (0)20 7460 5746/5747 between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday. If your call is out of hours contact your GP or your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

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