

Prostate Ultrasound and Biopsy

Patient Information – Urology Service

What is a prostate ultrasound?

One of the ways of looking at the prostate is by ultrasound. When you come to the clinic for evaluation, the urologist may find an abnormality when examining your prostate. Should this be the case then, at the same visit, an ultrasound and biopsy of the prostate will be performed.

Another reason for performing an ultrasound and biopsy of the prostate is if the blood test (called a Prostate Specific Antigen or PSA) is elevated. Both an elevated PSA and an abnormality on rectal examination may raise the possibility of there being cancer of the prostate. In these cases, not only would the prostate be visualised by ultrasound, but a small specimen (called a biopsy) will be taken.

An ultrasound and biopsy of the prostate is also performed as part of following a known prostate cancer through the active surveillance programme.

There is no special preparation for this procedure, although some urine in the bladder is useful. Having the bladder over-full, on the other hand, can make the examination rather uncomfortable. You may eat and drink before the examination and may drive home afterwards. However, it would not be advisable to cycle to and from your appointment.

How is the prostate ultrasound performed?

Ultrasound of the prostate is performed with you lying on your side and the ultrasound probe is placed into the rectum (bottom). Sound waves, too high pitched to hear, are then directed at the prostate and form a picture of the internal part of the prostate.

Biopsies of the prostate will be performed with a fine needle that is guided through the ultrasound probe, then through the wall of the rectum and into the prostate. These needles take small samples of the prostate from several places within the prostate gland. Local anaesthetic is administered via the ultrasound probe before taking the biopsies.

Possible complications

This ultrasound has no real side effects apart from some mild discomfort. Most men manage this extremely well.

After the biopsy, you can expect blood in the bowel motion, urine, or with ejaculation. This is normal and unless it is excessive there is no cause for concern. Whilst there is blood in the urine, it is important to have good fluid intake to make sure the urine remains dilute.

Occasionally swelling may occur within the prostate after a biopsy. This may, on rare occasions impede the flow of urine to such a degree that a catheter (a tube through the

penis into the bladder) is needed until the swelling subsides.

The only serious side effect of a prostate biopsy is the possibility of developing infection. This is uncommon and is why you will be given an injection of an antibiotic called ertapenem. Please tell your doctor if you have kidney problems. You may experience side effects from this medication such as: diarrhoea, rash, stomach upset and headache. Please inform your GP if these symptoms are troublesome. Ertapenem has been shown to greatly reduce the risk of infection after a prostate biopsy.

If you develop high fevers, shivering or sweats, then these symptoms may signify an infection that can be quite serious, please visit the Emergency Department at your local hospital. If this occurs, it will generally be within the first 48 hours after the biopsy. It is important to check you are not allergic to the antibiotics prescribed and you should discuss this with the urologist if you have any concerns.

Follow-up

Usually, the results of the ultrasound and biopsy will be available one to two weeks after the specimen is taken. **You will be told via a phone call with a Clinical Nurse Specialist whether the biopsy is positive or negative (i.e. if you have prostate cancer or not).**

The reason for this is that we understand it is difficult to absorb any further information once you have been told the biopsy is positive and we would like to give you time to process this. If it is positive, you will be sent a letter with details on accessing a video presentation that will help you understand prostate cancer, the treatment options available to you and some next steps. We highly recommend that you watch this and write down any questions that you have before your appointment with the urologist.

Following this, you will have an appointment with your urologist.

Contact information

For more information about:

- Hospital and specialist services, go to www.healthnz.govt.nz/hospitals-services/hospitals/canterbury
- Your health and medication, go to www.healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics
- Prostate Cancer Foundation of NZ, go to www.prostate.org.nz

For information on parking, how to get to the hospital, and visiting hours, please visit the [Christchurch Hospital](#) website.