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Prostate Biopsy

Definition

Prostate biopsy is a medical test in which very small pieces of your **prostate gland** are removed. The prostate is the small walnut-shaped gland in men that produces **semen**, the fluid in which sperm live. The prostate tissue removed is then examined under a microscope to look for abnormal cells.

The biopsy is usually performed because your doctor has felt something unusual during a physical exam, or because you have an elevated **prostate-specific antigen (PSA)** on a blood test. The PSA blood test measures the PSA produced by the prostate. If there are cancer cells present in the prostate, more PSA will be in the blood.

Risks

Prostate biopsy is generally a safe procedure. The risks, though rare, can include:

- Infection.
- Bleeding in the urethra, bladder, or from the rectum.
- Temporary inability to pass urine.
- Frequent need to urinate.
- Allergic reaction to medication.

The biopsy will not affect your ability to have an erection or your fertility.

Preparing for Prostate Biopsy

Follow all instructions from your doctor. Before your biopsy:

- Be sure to take any **antibiotics** prescribed. Antibiotics help prevent infection that may be caused by the biopsy.
- Tell your doctor what prescriptions, vitamins, or dietary supplements you are taking.
- Tell your doctor if you need to take antibiotics before dental work or if you have a heart murmur.
- Stop taking any medicine that thins your blood (such as Coumadin, Aspirin, or Ibuprophen) ten days before your biopsy, or as instructed by your doctor.
- Depending on the type of biopsy, you may need to have an enema the morning of the biopsy.

Procedure Description

There are three types of prostate biopsy:

- **Transrectal biopsy.** Using a **transrectal ultrasound** or **TRUS** (using sound waves to produce images of the prostate), your doctor visualizes the prostate and removes biopsy samples. The TRUS uses a probe approximately the same size and shape of a finger inserted into the rectum to produce images. Needles or a **biopsy gun** (a tool that allows the doctor to take several samples very quickly) are inserted through this probe to take the samples.

Your doctor may apply a **local anesthetic** (drug causing loss of feeling in a small area) inside your rectum before the biopsy. Between 12 and 18 pieces of tissue may be taken. The procedure usually lasts 30 minutes.

- **Transurethral biopsy.** Biopsy is removed by going through your urethra, the channel inside your penis that leads to your bladder. A **cystoscope**, a thin lighted tube, is inserted through your urethra. Once your doctor can see your prostate, a very small loop is passed through the scope and the biopsy sample is taken.

The area around your urethra is numbed for the procedure. Between 12 and 18 pieces of tissue may be taken. The procedure usually lasts between 30 and 45 minutes.

- **Transperineal biopsy.** Biopsy is performed by going through **perineum**, the area of skin between your testicles and your rectum.

A local anesthetic is injected into the area so that it is numb. Your doctor will insert a gloved and well-lubricated finger into your rectum to locate the prostate and hold it in place. A very small **incision** or cut is made, and biopsy needles are placed through this cut to obtain tissue. Between 12 and 18 pieces of tissue may be taken. The procedure usually lasts between 15 and 30 minutes.

After Prostate Biopsy

After the biopsy, your doctor may ask you to avoid strenuous activity for several hours. You may also need to take antibiotics for a few days to prevent infection. Follow your doctor's instructions and take all medication prescribed.

Following the biopsy, you may feel a mild ache in the area of the biopsy. There may be blood in your urine, feces, or semen for several days.

Follow-Up Instructions

Your doctor will contact you with the results of your biopsy. Contact your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

- Fever.
- Chills.
- Heavy bleeding.

- Bleeding that lasts longer than two days.
- Severe or worsening pain.
- Inability to pass urine for eight or more hours.
- Blood in your urine for longer than two days.

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