Having a prostate biopsy

The prostate is a small gland, found only in men, which is about the size of a walnut and lies at the base of the bladder. The tube draining urine from the bladder is called the urethra and passes through the prostate gland.

As men grow older, the prostate gland starts to enlarge and some men may experience irritation of the bladder and difficulty passing urine. An enlarged prostate is also known as Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH). The prostate gland produces a protein called Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) and a raised level of PSA in the bloodstream may indicate benign enlargement, infection or prostate cancer.

The best way to determine the cause of a raised PSA level is to take tiny samples (biopsies) from the prostate gland and examine them under a microscope.

Before the biopsy
No special preparation is needed for this test but you should have a shower or bath before your appointment.

Patients taking warfarin will be advised the dose to be taken before the biopsy by the prostate specialist nurse when attending their urology outpatient appointment.

Please also inform us if you have an abnormal heart valve as this may alter the choice of antibiotics that you are given before and after the procedure.

You will be given antibiotic tablets (Ciprofloxacin 500mg) to take 12 hours prior to the biopsy in order to reduce the risk of infection (see below). If you are allergic to penicillin you will be asked to obtain a prescription from your GP for the correct antibiotic.

During the biopsy
The procedure itself will take around ten to 15 minutes. You will be asked to lie on your left hand side on the ultrasound couch. The doctor performing the procedure will then gently insert an ultrasound probe, about the size of a finger, into the rectum to obtain images of the prostate, which sits immediately in front of the rectum. Local anaesthetic is used to make the procedure more comfortable and most men only feel mild discomfort and/ or a feeling of pressure on the bladder. Small biopsy samples (usually ten) are then taken from the prostate using a biopsy needle, which makes a loud click each time a sample is taken. The samples are then sent off to the laboratory.

After the biopsy
We will ask you to wait in the department for ten to 15 minutes to make sure you do not feel unwell or faint. Up to 15% of men feel slight pain after the biopsy, which usually settles
with simple pain relief such as paracetamol. You will be able to drive home and there are no restrictions on what you can do after the biopsy. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and take any regular medication as normal. You will be given a five-day course of Ciprofloxacin antibiotics (500mg to be taken twice daily) to take home with the advice to take them for two days and only take the remainder of the five-day course if you develop symptoms of infection such as fever or shivers. The results take about two weeks and will go to your consultant urologist who will give you the results at your follow-up appointment.

**Risks of prostate biopsy**

Overall, prostate biopsy is a safe procedure but it is important to be aware of the risk of infection due to the fact that the biopsy needle passes from a dirty area (rectum) into a clean area (prostate). To reduce your risk of developing an infection, you will be given some antibiotic tablets before and after the procedure. If you have an abnormal heart valve, valve replacement or a history of rheumatic fever or endocarditis, please let us know before the biopsy as different antibiotics are required for people with these conditions. Despite these precautions, up to 5% of men will develop an infection after the biopsy, requiring more antibiotics. If you start to run a temperature, feel unwell or shivery, have pain on passing urine or have foul-smelling urine, please contact your GP as you may require further antibiotic treatment.

Up to 70% of men notice some blood in their urine after a prostate biopsy. Up to 20% notice some blood when they open their bowels and about 25% notice blood in their semen. This bleeding is usually minor but can go on for up to a week. Bleeding is slightly more likely if you are taking aspirin or warfarin but please keep taking these drugs as usual before and after the biopsy.

**Useful numbers**

Radiology day case unit – telephone: 023 8079 8576
Ultrasound appointments – telephone: 023 8079 6079
Prostate specialist nurse – telephone: 023 8082 5779
Urology outpatient appointments – telephone: 023 8079 5902

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688 for help.