

# Diagnosing Prostate Cancer

## A Quick Guide

### Contents

This is a brief summary on 'Diagnosing prostate cancer' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

- Prostate cancer tests
- Further tests for prostate cancer
- Questions for your doctor

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

### Prostate cancer tests

Usually you begin by seeing your family doctor (GP) who will examine you and ask about your general health. They will take a blood test to check the levels of a protein called prostate specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. They will also do an examination of the prostate gland via the back passage (a digital rectal examination). If these tests are not normal, your doctor will refer you to a specialist at the hospital.

### At the hospital

The specialist will repeat the blood test and examination of the prostate gland. They will also usually ask you to have a scan using sound waves – a rectal ultrasound. The ultrasound probe goes into your back passage (rectum) to get a clear picture of the prostate gland. This is uncomfortable, but shouldn't hurt.

You may have up to 12 tissue samples (biopsies) taken during the scan. Your specialist takes the samples by firing a very small needle into the prostate and then removing it. This is a little uncomfortable, and may be painful but it does not take long. Before the test, you will have antibiotics to help prevent infection and an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area.

If your prostate biopsy does not find cancer cells but your doctor still thinks there may be a small prostate cancer present, they may suggest that you have an MRI scan or a different type of biopsy.

An **MRI scan** uses magnetism to build up a picture of the inside of the body. It can show abnormal areas in the prostate gland.

A **template biopsy** uses a template with holes approximately 5 mm apart. The doctor puts it over the area of skin behind the testicles (the perineum) and uses an ultrasound scanner to take between 30 to 50 biopsy samples from the prostate.

A **targeted biopsy** uses the information from your ultrasound scan and also the information from the MRI scan. The doctor can then accurately take biopsies from abnormal areas of the prostate gland.

### Further tests for prostate cancer

If tests show that you have prostate cancer, you may need more tests to see if the cancer has spread to anywhere else in your body. If you do need more tests, you may have

- A specialised scan to look for suspicious areas in the bones – a bone scan
- X-rays of your chest and any abnormal areas seen on your bone scan
- A CT scan or MRI scan to check the area around your prostate and the lymph nodes in your groin
- An ultrasound scan to look at your bladder and kidneys

### Waiting for results

It can take a week or so for your test results to come through. You usually go back to see the specialist to get them. Waiting for results is bound to be an anxious time for you. You may find that it helps to talk things over with a close friend or relative. If you would like to talk to someone outside your own friends and family, look in our coping with cancer section on our website for information about counselling.

### What to ask your doctor about prostate cancer tests

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are the tests looking for?
- How reliable are the tests?
- How long will I have to wait for the tests?
- Are they painful?
- Is there anything I need to do to prepare for the tests?
- Can I bring someone with me?
- Can I go home as soon as the tests are finished?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the results?

**For more information**, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK.

Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in March 2014. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)