

PROSTATE BIOPSY

Understanding Prostate Biopsies:

Your prostate gland is located at the base of your urinary bladder. It is normally the size of a walnut and surrounds the tube (urethra) through which you pass your urine. It produces the liquid (semen) part of your ejaculate which is added to your sperm during sex.

The prostate can be examined in two ways. First a doctor can actually feel its rear surface during a rectal exam because it sits just in front of your rectum. Second, some abnormalities of the gland will cause an elevated PSA (prostatic specific antigen) blood test. Abnormalities of these exams may indicate prostate cancer, benign (non-cancerous) tumors, infection or even the normal effects of getting older. In such cases, a biopsy is sometimes necessary to be sure of the exact problem.

The biopsy enables us to actually obtain small bits of prostate tissue which are sent to a laboratory. The tissue will be very carefully examined under a microscope by a specialty physician (pathologist). He or she can then report on whether the prostate cells appear abnormal, whether cancer is present or not, and to some extent, how dangerous the problems appears. This knowledge is essential in order for us to know if further treatment is necessary and if so, what kind will be most successful. If your unique clinical circumstances indicate a different approach, we will discuss it prior to your procedure.

The Procedure:

A prostate biopsy can be safely done in the office. The biopsy is done by inserting an ultrasound probe into the rectum and the needle is inserted through the probe to obtain the tissue. Ultrasound is used to enable more accurate placement of the needle. A tiny bit of the gland is then withdrawn through the needle and sent to the laboratory for diagnosing. One or more biopsies from different parts of the gland may be taken in this way. You will remain awake during the biopsy. Though you may experience mild discomfort, it is unusual for men to complain of severe pain during the procedure.

After Your Prostate Biopsy:

There are rarely any severe after effects of a prostate biopsy. Occasionally men experience mild discomfort at the site of the biopsy. Should this occur, it usually does not last long and can be treated with your usual pain medication. Some men will notice blood in their urine, semen or bowel movements after a prostate biopsy, although serious bleeding is rare. Certainly you should contact your doctor if you experience an elevated temperature, severe pain, severe bleeding or the passage of clots, or other unexpected symptoms. There is usually no need to change your normal activities, but we will discuss this at the time of your biopsy.

Commonly Asked Questions:

- ***Is it all right to have a bowel movement following my prostate biopsy?*** Yes. Having a bowel movement is not dangerous and should not be painful.
- ***Will the prostate biopsy affect me sexually?*** No. There will be no after effects of the biopsy that will change your sexual ability or enjoyment. Your semen may contain some blood for a while, but this is not harmful to you or your partner.
- ***How can I have a prostate problem if I have no symptoms?*** Prostate problems usually don't cause symptoms in their early stages. During this "silent" stage, treatment is far more likely to be successful. Therefore, it is important to make the diagnosis now.