

# Diagnosing Prostate Cancer - A Quick Guide



## Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing prostate cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

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

## Prostate cancer tests

You usually begin by seeing your GP. They will examine your prostate via your back passage (a digital rectal exam) and take a blood test to measure your PSA level.

If these tests are not normal, you will go to a specialist. The specialist will repeat the tests the GP has done. The specialist will want you to have a scan using sound waves – a rectal ultrasound. The ultrasound probe goes into your back passage to get a clear picture of the prostate gland. This is uncomfortable, but shouldn't hurt.

You may have tissue samples (biopsies) taken during the scan. Your specialist takes the samples by firing a very small needle into the prostate. This is a little uncomfortable, and may be painful but it

does not take long. You will feel a slight jolt each time the needle is fired. Before the test, you will have antibiotics to help prevent infection and an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area.

## Further tests for prostate cancer

If tests show 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 suspicious areas seen on your bone scan
- A CT scan or an 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

It can take a week or so for your results to come through. You usually go back to see the specialist to get your results. Waiting for results is bound to be an anxious time for you. You may find 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 for more about counselling.

## Notes

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

- What tests are you going to do?
- Why - what are you looking for?
- Will the tests definitely show whether I have cancer?
- How long will I have to wait before the tests?
- Are they painful?
- How should I prepare?
- May I go home as soon as the tests are finished?
- How long do the results take?
- How will I be told about the results?

### More information

For more information about prostate cancer, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

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 cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

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 November 2010. 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. © Cancer Research UK 2010. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).