

Transrectal ultrasound scan

This fact sheet is designed to tell you what a transrectal ultrasound scan is, and what is involved. Please read it before having your scan. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is a transrectal ultrasound?

An ultrasound scan is a medical imaging test that uses high frequency sound waves to take pictures of the inside of the body. 'Transrectal' means that the pictures are taken through the back passage, or rectum.

A transrectal ultrasound is commonly used with men to get images of the prostate. You may also have a biopsy at the same time (see *Biopsy* fact sheet).

It can also be used to deliver and monitor cancer treatments.

The test is rarely painful but sometimes a sedative is given, or local anaesthetic is injected into the area of your rectum to minimise discomfort.

Procedure

You will be given instructions on how to prepare for your scan. Before the appointment you will need to have an enema. This is a medication given into the rectum to empty your bowels. You will be restricted to a light diet on the day before the scan.

On arrival, you will be given a laxative to empty your rectum. You should also empty your bladder at this time.

A narrow ultrasound camera (transducer) is placed inside the rectum to take high quality images of the structures in the pelvis. The transducer is sterilised and is covered with a sterile cover and sterile gel.

A chaperone or support person will be provided if you ask for one.

If at any point during the scan you feel pain, you should tell the person doing the scan and ask them to stop. The procedure should take about 30 minutes.

After the procedure

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) looks at the images and sends the results to your treating doctor. You should not have any issues after your test, although you may have some diarrhea after the enema.

Risks involved

Ultrasound has been safely used in medical diagnosis for many years. Studies have not shown any negative effects.

Alternatives to transrectal ultrasound of the prostate

Physical examination by your doctor or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the prostate can sometimes be used instead of transrectal ultrasound.

For more information

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: www.radiologyinfo.org

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