

Ultrasound: Prostate Exam

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how to prepare for an ultrasound exam of the prostate gland, how it works, how it is done, what you will feel during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is a prostate ultrasound?

Ultrasound exams use sound waves to create images of the inside of the body. An ultrasound of the prostate checks the health of your prostate gland and *seminal vesicles* (glands that produce the fluid that helps semen move through the urethra). Ultrasound can also show prostate size, calcium deposits, the flow of blood within your prostate, and any blockages or swelling.

How does the exam work?

A *sonographer* (ultrasound technologist) will use a hand-held device that sends and receives sound waves. This device is called a *transducer*.

The sonographer will gently place the transducer a short distance into your rectum. As the sound waves bounce off your body's fluids and tissues, images of your prostate and related structures are created. These images will appear on a computer monitor for your radiologist to see.

How should I prepare?

You do not need to prepare in any special way for this exam.

How is the exam done?

- You will be asked to remove your clothing from the waist down. You will be given a sheet to cover yourself.
- You will lie on your left side on an exam table.
- The sonographer will then insert a small prostate transducer into your rectum and gently move it around to take the images.



Talk with your urologist if you have any questions about your prostate health.

- If needed, the radiologist may take more pictures after the sonographer is done.

What will I feel during the exam?

- There is little or no discomfort with ultrasound exams.
- You will feel the transducer slowly move a short distance into your rectum.
- The exam usually takes less than 20 minutes.

Who interprets the results of the exam and how do I get them?

A radiologist who specializes in ultrasound will review the images and send a report to your referring doctor. You will receive your results from the doctor who ordered the test. The radiologist may also talk with you about early findings when your exam is over.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105