

Prostate Cancer Detection and Diagnosis

Prostate cancer is most often detected with a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and a digital rectal exam (DRE), and is confirmed by a biopsy. A variety of imaging scans may be used to help your doctor **biopsy**, **diagnose**, and **stage** prostate cancer. Imaging scans can also help determine if and where the cancer has **spread**, plan **treatment**, or find out if treatment is working.

	Imaging Type	About the Imaging Scan
Conventional Imaging	Ultrasound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to look for suspicious areas in the prostate
	Bone Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows prostate cancer that may have spread to bones Requires other tests to confirm cancer in the bones
	MRI Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to determine if a biopsy is needed Guides needles for a biopsy Can help determine the stage of prostate cancer
	CT Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detects prostate cancer in lymph nodes After a recurrence, can help determine organ involvement
Advanced Imaging	PET/CT Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows images of prostate cancer that may have spread Are often less detailed than MRI or CT images Uses new and advanced imaging agents to detect cancer

Advanced Imaging and New Imaging Agents

All imaging tests have limitations. Some are better at detecting cancer in lymph nodes, some work best if the PSA levels are rising, and others may miss small areas of prostate cancer that have come back or spread. With the discovery of new imaging agents, these pictures of the inside of the body make it easier to see prostate cancer cells, even in small amounts, that have traveled outside the prostate to other places in the body. These advances are improving how a patient's prognosis, or outcome, is determined, if a treatment is working, and how treatment decisions are made.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Be sure to talk to your doctor about which scans might be best for you. Here are some questions to get you started:



1. What are the differences between a CT scan, MRI scan, and PET/CT scan?
2. Will I need more than one imaging scan?
3. How long do these scans take and how do I prepare?
4. How often will I need to have scans?
5. What kind of imaging agent will be used?
6. Should I be concerned about side effects from any of the imaging agents?
7. Does my PSA level have to be rising to qualify for any of these imaging scans?
8. What will the results tell me?

CT=Computed Tomography; DRE=Digital Rectal Exam; MRI=Magnetic Resonance Imaging; PET=Positron Emission Tomography; PSA=Prostate-Specific Antigen