

Mayo Clinic minute: Prostate biopsy technique reduces infection risk

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June is Men's Health Month. Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in American men. It's the second-leading cause of cancer death in American men, behind only lung cancer.

Prostate cancer detected early has the best chance of successful treatment. If an abnormality is found during routine prostate screening, further tests can determine if it's cancer. And a certain biopsy technique is reducing the risk of infection and helping pinpoint potential cancer.

Nearly 1 million American men have [prostate biopsies](#) every year to diagnose cancer.

"Most biopsies in this country are done with a transrectal ultrasound machine. The problem with this technique is that there is a risk of infection because the needle traverses the rectal wall and is exposed to fecal contamination," says Dr. Julio Gundian Jr., a Mayo Clinic urologist.

But a new way of performing prostate biopsy reduces the chance of infection to nearly zero. It's an [outpatient procedure](#) called "transperineal ultrasound-guided MRI fusion biopsy."

"This technique allows us to avoid the rectum altogether," says Dr. Gundian. "We place a needle through the perineum, which is the skin between the scrotum and the anus, directly into the prostate."

The technology superimposes an MRI on top of the ultrasound, which gives doctors a better view of the prostate.

"So this makes the procedure no longer a blind technique where we are just randomly obtaining tissue from the prostate," says Dr. Gundian.

The procedure could catch cancer earlier and nearly eliminate the risk of infection.

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