

# Penile Cancer: Tests After Diagnosis



## What tests might I have after being diagnosed?

After a diagnosis of penile cancer, you will likely need more tests. These tests help your healthcare providers learn more about the cancer. They can help show if it has grown into nearby areas or spread to other parts of your body. The test results help your healthcare providers decide the best ways to treat the cancer. If you have any questions about these or other tests, be sure to talk with your healthcare team.

The tests you may have can include:

- Ultrasound
- CT scan
- MRI
- Lymph node biopsy

## Imaging Tests

### Ultrasound

This test uses sound waves and a computer to create a picture of tissues inside your body. No radiation is used. You will lie on a table. A technician will move a probe, or transducer, along your skin. The echoes that bounce back are picked up and made into an image on a computer screen. This test can help see how deeply a tumor has gone into (invaded) the penis. It can also be used to see if lymph nodes in the groin are enlarged.

### CT scan

This test uses a series of X-rays from many angles. A computer puts the images together into 1 detailed image. You may need to drink a special X-ray dye (contrast medium) just before the scan. Or it may be injected into your vein through an IV or intravenous line. The dye helps images show up more clearly on the X-rays. The dye may cause a warm flush feeling to go through your body. Tell your healthcare provider if you are allergic to or have had a reaction to X-ray dye. This test can show if the lymph nodes are enlarged in the pelvis, abdomen (belly), or both. It can also show how big the tumor is and whether the cancer has spread to other parts of your body.

### MRI

An MRI uses magnets, radio waves, and a computer to make detailed pictures of the inside of the body. For this test, you lie still on a table as it slides into a long, tube-like scanner. If you are not comfortable in small spaces, you may be given a medicine to relax you before the test. (This is called a sedative.) The scanner directs a beam of radio waves at the area that is being checked. You may need more than 1 set of images. Each may take 2 to 15 minutes. This test is painless, but it may take an hour or more. Like CT scans, MRI scans can show enlarged lymph nodes in the abdomen or in the pelvis. MRI pictures are better if the penis is erect. A medicine might be injected into your penis to make it erect for this test.

## Lymph node biopsy

### Sentinel lymph node biopsy

This is a type of biopsy that can help a healthcare provider find the first lymph node (sentinel node) that drains from the tumor. If the sentinel node contains cancer, the surgeon may need to take out more lymph nodes. If the sentinel node does not have cancer in it, you don't need to have other lymph nodes removed. Researchers are still testing this approach to checking lymph nodes for penile cancer.

## **Inguinal lymph node dissection**

If the lymph nodes are swollen or there is another reason to think they might contain cancer, surgery might be done to remove those nodes to test them for cancer.

## **Working with your healthcare provider**

Your healthcare provider will talk with you about which tests you'll need and what they will be like. Make sure to get ready for the tests as instructed. Ask questions and talk about any concerns you have.

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