

Patient Information - Fine Needle Aspiration or Core Biopsy of the Breast using Ultrasound

Department of Radiology – New QEII Hospital

Introduction

A fine needle aspiration (FNA) is a method to collect fluid or a few cells so that they can be examined under a microscope. The FNA is a way of taking a few cells from an abnormal area, whereas a core biopsy takes a larger specimen of tissue. The specimen collected can then be examined under a microscope.

Are there any risks from the procedure?

Occasionally there may be some bleeding inside the breast and a bruise or swelling (haematoma) will form.

What are the benefits?

The benefits from making a diagnosis and consequently giving you the right treatment outweigh any small risks involved. The risk to your health from not having the examination and missing a serious disorder may be much greater.

These procedures are minimally invasive methods of obtaining tissue samples and may save you from having a more major procedure.

Are there any precautions?

Please inform this department **before** you come for your examination:

- If you are, or think you may be pregnant
- If you have breast implants

If you are taking tablets to thin the blood (anticoagulants), you should inform the Radiology Department. Please ring the telephone number on your appointment letter or tell the radiologist when you arrive.

Preparations prior to the procedure

- Please wash your breasts and under your arms before coming to the department
- After washing, **do not** use talcum powder or deodorant
- It is advisable to wear separates, such as a skirt and top, or trousers and top as you will need to undress from the waist upwards

When you arrive

You will be booked in at reception and directed to a cubicle to undress from the waist upwards and put on a hospital gown. A basket will be provided for your belongings – please keep this with you at all times. You will be taken to the examination room where the procedure will be explained to you.

What happens during the procedure?

You will be asked to lie on your back on the couch and the radiologist will scan the breast to locate the area.

FNA

Once the area has been located, the surrounding skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and numbed using local anaesthetic. A small needle is then placed into the breast. Using a syringe attached to the needle, suction is applied to draw up fluid and cells. The needle is moved up and down through the breast tissue whilst this is happening. The needle is then removed and the sample placed in a special bottle or onto a microscope slide. The procedure may be repeated several times. After the procedure a small dressing will be placed over the area and it should be kept dry for 48 hours.

Core biopsy

Once the area has been located, the surrounding skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and numbed using local anaesthetic. A small nick will be made in the skin to assist in placing the biopsy needle close to the area. The needle is attached to a small device or 'gun'. The device will direct the needle into the lump with a clicking noise and collects a narrow tubular core of tissue. The needle is then withdrawn from the breast and the specimen extracted from it. The process is repeated several times. After the procedure a small dressing will be placed over the area and it should be kept dry for 48 hours.

Will it hurt?

You may feel some stinging as the local anaesthetic goes in, but the area will soon go numb. During the actual procedure, you should not feel any discomfort. If a bruise or swelling forms afterwards, this may be uncomfortable for a day or two.

How long will it take?

The procedure usually takes approximately 30 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

You may experience some discomfort from the puncture site for 24 - 48 hours. You may wish to take a simple painkiller (e.g. paracetamol). **Do not take** medication which contains aspirin as this may cause a larger bruise. It may also help to wear a lightweight bra at night to support your breast after the procedure.

Can I bring a relative/friend to my appointment?

Yes, a relative or a friend may accompany you to the department, but they are not usually allowed in the examination room. **Please do not bring young children with you.**

When will I receive my results?

The specimen collected during the procedure will be sent to the pathology laboratory for analysis. The pathology report will be sent to your consultant and this normally takes 7 days.

Feedback

When you attend your hospital appointment you should be offered the Friends and Family Test survey asking you the question, **“How likely are you to recommend our service to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?”**. We welcome your comments about what was good about your visit and what would have made your experience better. Your feedback is anonymous and is used to help improve the services we provide to all our patients.

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