

X-ray guided core biopsy of the breast

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what happens when you have an x-ray guided core biopsy of the breast. It discusses the risks and benefits and tells you what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a radiologist in the Breast Care Unit or to one of the breast care nurses.

What is an x-ray guided core biopsy of the breast?

An x-ray guided core biopsy of the breast is a procedure in which a small sample of tissue is removed from the breast using a specialised vacuum assisted biopsy needle, so we can look at it under a microscope.

Core biopsies are performed by consultant radiologists/consultant radiographers and advanced practitioner radiographers who are all specially trained to do them.

What are the benefits – why should I have this procedure?

If changes in your breasts are detected by a mammogram or ultrasound scan, the breast consultant may require a tissue sample (core biopsy) to identify what is causing the changes. These tissue samples can be analysed under a microscope and the results can help to confirm the diagnosis.

What are the risks?

You will be given a local anaesthetic before the procedure but you may still experience some pain.

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

Severe bleeding rarely occurs but when it does may need to be treated with a surgical procedure. Care is taken during the procedure to minimise the risk of infection.

Sometimes we might need to do another the biopsy may need to be repeated if further more tissue is required needed for histological diagnosis.

How can I prepare for a core biopsy?

No preparation is needed. You can eat and drink normally before and after the procedure However:

- Please let the radiologist / radiographer know before the procedure if you are taking any antiplatelet medicines (such as aspirin or clopidogrel) or any medicines that thin the blood e.g. Warfarin, Apixaban, as you might need to stop taking these for a short time before your procedure.

- If you are allergic to any medication (particularly local anaesthetic), please inform the radiologist before the procedure.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. A doctor or radiographer will fully explain the procedure and obtain verbal consent if you agree to proceed.

What happens during the procedure?

We will sit you down in the right place on the x-ray machine and use a compression plate to make sure you don't move around. This works in the same way as a mammogram does.

We will take x-rays and you will stay in the same place in the machine throughout the whole procedure which can last up to 30 minutes. However, you should be prepared to be in the department for longer in case delays occur or you wish to take time to rest and recover after the procedure.

A member of the breast team will be with you at all times. The area of your breast will be cleaned to reduce the risk of infection and a local anaesthetic will be administered to numb the area to be sampled.

A needle will be inserted into the breast once and between 6 and 12 samples will be taken automatically over a period of 1-2 minutes. During this time you will hear the machine whirring as it takes the samples.

Once we have got enough tissue samples, one or more small metal (titanium) markers measuring about 3 mm may be placed in the breast to mark the biopsy site for any future biopsies or treatment. There are no known harmful effects from the metal markers and they do not need to be removed from the breast at any stage.. The markers do not set off metal detectors at airports. Please let the radiologist know if you have any metal allergies.

When the procedure is finished, an assistant radiographer will apply firm compression to your breast biopsy site by an assistant/radiographer for 5 - 10 minutes to help reduce the risk of bruising. A paper stitch (steristrip) will be placed over the biopsy site and covered with a sterile, dressing. After the dressing has been applied, you will be able to get dressed. A quiet room is available in the department if you need some time to rest after the procedure.

Will I feel any pain?

During the procedure the local anaesthetic may cause some stinging initially before it numbs the breast, but this should only last for a few seconds. You may feel some pressure on the breast during the procedure but you should not feel any pain.

If you do feel pain, please tell the consultant / practitioner and more local anaesthetic can be given.

After one to three hours the local anaesthetic should start to wear off and your breast may feel tender or painful. If the area becomes particularly uncomfortable take a mild over the counter painkiller, such as paracetamol, following the instructions on the pack. Avoid taking medicines that contain aspirin, as these could cause bruising in the breast.

What happens after the procedure?

The samples will be sent to the laboratory to be analysed. Your results are usually back within 7-10 days. You will be given instructions on how to make follow up outpatient appointment to see the breast surgeon to receive your results.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You can go back to normal activity straight away but should avoid any strenuous activity, such as heavy lifting, jogging, and aerobics for the rest of the day. If your work is physical we advise light duties only for the rest of the day, and then back to normal duties the following day.

The dressing needs to be kept on the breast for **three days**, after which you can take off. You shouldn't need any more dressings after that. Avoid getting the dressing wet for at least 24 hours. Please refer to the aftercare sheet given to you after the procedure for more information.

What should I do if I have a problem?

You may notice some bruising at the biopsy site. This is to be expected and will go down over the next week or so.

Bleeding or swelling is rare but if it does happen please follow these instructions:

- Remove the dressing from the puncture site and apply pressure to the biopsy site.
- Do this firmly by pressing with the palm of your hand for 10 minutes using either tissues or a paper kitchen towel in the same way the nurse pressed immediately after the biopsy.
- If the bleeding or swelling continues after 15 minutes you should go to your GP or the Emergency Department (A&E) / Minor Injuries Unit (Victoria Infirmary, Northwich), taking this leaflet with you.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Yes. An appointment will be arranged for you to come in and discuss your results.

**If you have any further questions, contact the Breast Care Unit on 01270 612396.
Open Monday to Friday, 8.50am – 4.50pm.**

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff or telephone 01270 612396.