

Ultrasound fine needle aspiration/drainage of the breast and axilla

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what happens when you have an ultrasound guided fine needle aspiration/drainage of the breast and axilla (armpit area). It discusses the benefits and risks of this procedure and tells you what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a radiologist or radiographer at your appointment.

What is an ultrasound guided fine needle aspiration / drainage of the breast / axilla?

An aspiration is removal of fluid from the breast using a small needle. Fine needle aspirations / drainages are performed by consultant radiologists and consultant radiographers who are specially trained to do them.

These procedures do not require a local anaesthetic.

An ultrasound guided fine needle aspiration of the breast is a procedure where a small sample of cells is removed from the breast / axilla using a small needle, so that it can be examined under a microscope. An ultrasound machine is used to identify the area of the breast that requires examination and to guide the needle to the correct position for the cell sampling.

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

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

Simple aspirations are carried out to remove fluid from a cyst or abscess for testing or to confirm an abnormality type.

What are the risks?

Occasionally, after the needle test, there may be some bleeding inside the breast / axilla and there may be a bruise or swelling.

Care is taken during the procedure to minimise the risk of infection.

Sometimes the needle test may need to be repeated or a tissue sample taken if further information is needed for diagnosis.

How can I prepare for a fine needle aspiration / drainage?

No I preparations is needed, you can eat and drink normally before and after 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?

The procedure should last no longer than 20 minutes and is carried out in an ultrasound room. Once you are in the examination room, we will ask you to undress from the waist up and to lie on the examination couch. We will do an ultrasound of the breast to work out where need to take a sample from.

The consultant radiologist/consultant radiographer will clean this area of your breast. The ultrasound machine is used to guide the needle into the correct position and this is then moved within the breast to obtain the cell sample.

When the procedure is finished, compression will be applied by an assistant/radiographer and a dressing applied to the breast and 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?

You may feel an initial pin prick as the needle is introduced and some sensation/discomfort as the needle is moved within the breast.

What happens after the procedure?

The sample will be sent to the laboratory to be analysed. Your results are usually back within 7-10 day and 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.

What should I do if I have a problem?

You may notice some bruising and soreness in the breast but this will settle quickly.

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

- Apply firm pressure to the biopsy site.
- If the bleeding or swelling continues after 15 minutes you should go to your GP or the Emergency Department (A&E) 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 the results.

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

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.