

PATIENT INFORMATION

Breast Imaging:

Vacuum Assisted Excision (VAE) of the Breast

This leaflet explains a vacuum assisted breast excision, including the risks and what to expect.

We understand that you may be anxious about this procedure. This leaflet will help you prepare by providing you with specific information about this investigation.

What is a VAE and why do I need one?

This procedure removes small samples of tissue from your breast where an abnormality has been seen on your x-ray or ultrasound. These are then examined by a Pathologist who will make a diagnosis.

Although your previous biopsy did not show any malignancy, there are some lesions in which it is considered safest to remove more of the area.

The biopsy will be performed under ultrasound or x-ray guidance. This depends on where the abnormality is most easily visualised and will be discussed with you prior to the procedure. Please ask if you have any further questions.

What happens during the biopsy?

The procedure will be performed by a suitably qualified Doctor or Radiographer who will be assisted by radiographers or support workers. They will explain the procedure to you and ask for your consent.

If using x-ray guidance, you will be positioned into the machine by the radiographers and compression applied to hold the breast in place. This is similar to a mammogram.

Once the area of abnormality has been located, your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic fluid. Local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area, this may sting for a few seconds. The area should be numb but it is normal to feel 'pushing sensations' during the procedure.

The sampling device will be inserted into your breast, this is attached to a medical vacuum which uses gentle suction to allow sampling of the breast tissue. You will hear the machine working as samples are taken.

It is very important that you are able to stay still during the procedure, this may take up to 45 minutes. Followed by 30 minutes of compression.

Please feel free to bring a friend or relative with you whilst you wait. However, they will not be allowed into the room for the actual procedure. Unfortunately, we do not have childcare facilities so please do not bring young children with you.

What is a marker clip?

Sometimes it is necessary to mark where the biopsy is taken. This is done by using a small metal clip that can locate the area in the future. You will not be able to feel the marker and they do not cause side effects or problems with MRI scanners or airport/metal detectors.

What are the risks?

Internal bruising (haematoma) in the breast and bleeding at the wound site can occur. These usually resolve over time without any additional treatment. **Please inform us if you are taking anticoagulant medication as bruising is more likely.**

Infection is very unusual but may require antibiotics. We use sterile equipment to minimise this risk and will provide you with appropriate aftercare guidance. If the skin around the wound becomes reddened and sore, please make an appointment to see your GP.

Tissue damage is a very small risk when ultrasound or x-ray guidance is used.

Allergic reactions can be caused by local anaesthetic but are very rare.

What happens after the excision?

Firm pressure is applied to the breast to reduce bruising. Paper stitches and a dressing are placed on the incision with a pressure dressing. These should stay on for 24 hours.

Please inform us if you have allergies to plasters or dressings.

Expect to stay in the unit for 30 minutes after the procedure so we can ensure there is no further bleeding and you are well enough to leave.

You will be given an information leaflet regarding aftercare.

When can I expect my results?



Your biopsy result will be reviewed at a multi-disciplinary team meeting before being given to you. This allows surgeons, radiologists and pathologists to ensure appropriate treatment planning for you.

You will have a chat with one of our Breast Care Nursing team who will arrange a results appointment for you.

If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff. You can also call the Breast Care Nurse on: 01803 655634 or 07825735161 (Monday – Friday, 09:00-16,00).

If you require a translation service or interpreter; please let us know when your appointment is booked.

If you are taking anticoagulant medication please let us know.

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.