

PATIENT INFORMATION

Breast Imaging

Breast Biopsy

This leaflet explains a breast biopsy, 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 breast biopsy and why do I need one?

A biopsy is needed to investigate an abnormality seen under ultrasound or x-ray. Compared to surgical biopsy, these procedures involve minimal chances of scarring, infection or pain, and have a much shorter recovery time.

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 beginning.

The reasons for this procedure should have been discussed with you in the clinic, please ask the clinician if you have any further questions.

Small samples of tissue are removed from your breast using a small device. These are then examined by a Pathologist who will make a diagnosis.

Sometimes a repeat biopsy is required to obtain a definitive diagnosis, this does not mean the initial biopsy was performed incorrectly.

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 verbal 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.

Once the area 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 clinician will insert the needle into your breast and 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 10-30 minutes.

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 locates the area on future mammograms. 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 biopsy?

A small dressing and adhesive strips will be applied to the area once finished.

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

You will be given an information leaflet after the biopsy regarding aftercare.

When can I expect my results?

How you will receive your biopsy results will be discussed with you following the procedure.

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.

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.

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