

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Biopsy of the breast using mammographic guidance (stereotaxis)

Your consultant has arranged for you to have a biopsy of your breast using the mammography machine for guidance - also known as a stereotaxis or stereo biopsy. This leaflet will help you to understand what this involves.

What is a breast biopsy using mammography for guidance?

This is a special technique to take a few small samples of breast tissue for examination in the pathology laboratory. The area in your breast is seen using the mammography machine and x-rays will be taken throughout in order to ensure the biopsy needle is in the correct position.

Is it painful and how long does it last?

The local anaesthetic may sting for a few moments but then you should feel nothing. Please mention to the doctor if you feel any discomfort as you may require some more anaesthetic. The examination usually takes about half an hour.

Can I have someone with me?

Unfortunately, because the examination requires x-ray radiation, we are unable to allow someone to accompany you into the room.

What happens during the procedure?

Depending on the area of concern in your breast, you may be given a vacuum-assisted biopsy or a core biopsy. In both of these, using a special attachment your breast is placed in the mammography machine and compressed in a similar way to having a mammogram. You will be required to stay in this position throughout the procedure.

If you are taking any anticoagulants (blood thinning tablets) you should let the doctor know before having the core biopsy procedure.

What is a vacuum-assisted biopsy?

After local anaesthetic is given to numb the area, a small cut is made to the skin. A hollow probe connected to a vacuum device is placed through this. Using mammography as a guide, breast tissue is sucked through the probe by the vacuum into a connecting chamber. This enables the removal of several tissue samples without having to remove the probe.

These samples are sent to the laboratory, where they are examined under a microscope to establish a diagnosis.

When the vacuum-assisted biopsy has been performed, you will usually have a small dressing applied and be asked to keep this on for a day or so afterwards.

Sometimes very thin strips of adhesive tape are used to help the edges of the wound to close.

What is a core biopsy?

After local anaesthetic is given to numb the area, a small cut is made to the skin and the core biopsy needle is introduced. The clinician may take several samples. The tissue is sent to the laboratory where it is examined under a microscope to establish a diagnosis.

When the core biopsy has been performed, you will usually have a small dressing applied and be asked to keep this on for a day or so afterwards. Sometimes very thin strips of adhesive tape are used to help the edges of the wound to close.

Can I take pain relief?

Once the local anaesthetic wears off after your procedure, you may find your breast aches and it may become bruised. You can take pain relief medication if the area is tender or painful. You should contact your GP or Clinic 14 (the Breast Clinic) if you experience swelling, bleeding, or inflammation in the breast.

Your results appointment will be arranged before you leave the clinic.

Contact details

Breast Care
Clinic 14
Tel: 01623 622515, extension 3513

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information or advice.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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