



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Vacuum assisted biopsy

Issued by the Breast Team

This leaflet is to explain what a vacuum assisted biopsy is, and what this involves.

Before the procedure you must tell us if you are on any medication to thin your blood, or if you have a clotting disorder.

Why am I having a Vacuum Assisted Biopsy?

An area in your breast has been previously biopsied and has shown changes which we would like to investigate further. To do this you have been advised to have a vacuum assisted biopsy. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this in more detail. Please remember a large number of abnormalities turn out to be benign (non-cancerous), with no risk to your health.

A vacuum assisted biopsy is an examination where small samples of breast tissue are taken from the breast using a special hollow probe attached to a gentle vacuum pump.

The vacuum assisted biopsy may reduce the need for you to have an operation to help find out what is going on in your breast.

The procedure will be carried out in the x-ray department, it may take up to 1½ hours. Most of this time is used for preparation, positioning of the needle into the correct place, and aftercare.

An ultrasound scan machine will be used to guide us to the area in your breast, to be tested.

Will the biopsy be painful?

Most people do not find the procedure painful although there may be some discomfort for brief periods, during and following the procedure.

What are the risks of not having the vacuum assisted biopsy?
The risk of not having the biopsy is that you could be leaving a cancer undetected, which could be treated and removed at an earlier stage.

How is the biopsy done?

The vacuum assisted biopsy will be carried out by the consultant working in the x-ray department. They will explain the procedure, and ask you to sign a consent form agreeing to have the biopsy done. They will be helped by a radiology assistant.

When the procedure is carried out you will need to be lying on the couch in the scan room.

You will be given a local anaesthetic into the area to be tested, this may sting for a short time. It will numb the skin and the underlying breast tissue. A small cut will be made in the skin, and the needle will be inserted using the ultrasound scan machine to check the needle position.

A larger needle, with a suction device will be used to take the sample, so that we can obtain more information about the area of concern.

The larger needle will remain in your breast whilst the samples are being taken. You will feel a pushing/pressure sensation, but it will not be sharp or painful. The machine makes a small amount of noise and you may feel vibration.

When all the samples have been taken, and before the larger needle is removed a marker clip is placed into the biopsy site. The marker clip is approximately 2mm in size, it will not cause any pain once it is in your breast. This allows us to check with a mammogram that the correct area has been sampled, and will also highlight on any future mammograms that the area has been tested. The clip will not interfere with any potential future investigations.

Once the test has been completed the larger needle will be removed and the radiology assistant will press firmly to stop internal bleeding (haematoma).

A dressing will be applied to the biopsy site. This can be removed the next day.

You will be asked to remain in the hospital or x-ray department for 30 minutes. This is to ensure that if you have any bleeding, or feel unwell after the test, that you can receive medical assistance.

What happens after the biopsy?

After the biopsy you may experience some tenderness. This is quite normal and may be relieved by taking a mild painkiller, such as paracetamol – **do not take aspirin.**

There may be significant bruising in the skin and in the tissues where the biopsy has been taken from. This is normal and should fade as any other bruise would.

To help reduce discomfort and bruising we suggest you wear a firm bra or sports bra for 48 hours, we also advise wearing the bra to bed.

However if you have any concerns following the biopsy you can ring the breast nurses at the hospital for advice. In the event of a problem in the evening or at the weekend then please go to your local walk-in service.

You will be able to resume your usual activities following the biopsy.

Results

Your results will take 7 – 10 days. The multidisciplinary team will meet to discuss your results and decide what to do next. You will be sent an appointment to be seen in clinic to discuss the results, and any further investigations, or treatment.

Contact us

If you have any concerns or queries please contact us Monday – Friday 8.30am - 5pm.

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
North Tyneside General Hospital**
0191 293 4183

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
Hexham General Hospital**
01434 655 386

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
Wansbeck General Hospital**
01670 529 319
01670 529 391
01670 529 636

Sources of information

Breast Cancer Care

Helpline 0808 800 6000

Website www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline

0845 601 6161 or

Website www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign

www.breastcare.co.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



PIN 688/V3

Review date: April 2024

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.