



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Your guide to needle tests, core biopsy and other investigations

Issued by the Breast Team

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[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet gives you information about the investigations that you may have whilst visiting the breast clinic.**

## **What is a needle test?**

A needle test or 'Fine Needle Aspiration' (FNA) removes a sample of cells from inside the breast which will be looked at under the microscope. The test gives the doctor more information about the area in your breasts being examined. The whole procedure will take about 10 - 15 minutes.

## **How is the test done?**

The needle test can be done immediately if the doctor can feel the area in your breast that needs to be sampled.

If the area cannot be felt, the radiologist (X-ray doctor) will do the test with the help of imaging. An X-ray (mammogram) or ultrasound machine will be used to guide the needle to the exact area to be sampled.

If the test is to be done using X-ray guidance, this will be done with you sitting in a chair, and having your breast held in the X-ray machine whilst the needle is positioned.

Further X-rays will be taken to ensure that the needle position is in the right place. This is called a stereotactic needle test.

If the test is to be done using ultrasound guidance, this will be done with you lying on a couch and can be performed at your local hospital.

When the area to be sampled is found, a very thin needle will then be passed into your breast to take a sample of the cells.

## **Will the test be painful?**

Most women say this test is uncomfortable and compare it to having a blood sample taken from their arm. A local anaesthetic may be given.

## **What about the results of the test?**

The results will be communicated to you by letter or a member of staff will call you.

## **What is a core biopsy?**

Sometimes another test – known as a core biopsy – may also be required. If this is the case then a local anaesthetic will be used to “numb” the area. A small cut will then be made in the skin and a needle inserted to take a small piece of tissue from the breast.

The instrument used makes a loud ‘click’ when the samples are taken. Usually three or five samples are taken. It usually takes seven to ten days to examine these samples and an appointment will be made for you to return to the clinic for these results. This test may also require the help of a mammogram (stereotactic biopsy) or ultrasound machine (guided biopsy) to guide the X-ray doctor to the exact area to be sampled.

## **What is an image guided vacuum assisted biopsy?**

Sometimes more information is needed about the area in your breast being examined then you may be advised to have this test. This may reduce the need for you to have an operation to help to find out what is going on in your breast.

## How is the test done?

The radiologist (x-ray doctor) will do the test with the help of the X-ray (mammogram) to guide him/her to the exact area to be sampled. This will be arranged for you at Wansbeck or Hexham General Hospital.

It can be done with you either lying down or sitting depending on whether the ultrasound or mammogram machine is used.

A local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area and a small cut will then be made in the skin. A needle, with a suction device attached, will then be inserted into the breast and small amounts of tissue will be sucked away.

## Risks

There are some risks associated with all tests. These will have been discussed with you before you agreed to the procedure.

If you have any questions or need further information about your treatment please speak to your breast care nurse or doctor.

## What happens after the tests?

After the tests you may experience some tenderness. This is quite normal and may be relieved by taking a mild painkiller, e.g. paracetamol – **do not take aspirin**. The nurse will give you advice.

There may be some bruising around the area. This is normal and should fade as any other bruise would.

You may be more comfortable wearing a supporting bra in bed for the first couple of nights.

The small dressing applied after the test can be removed the next day. You can bathe or shower as usual.

## Breast MRI

Sometimes further images are required using MRI. This is a specialist scan that uses magnetic energy and radio waves to produce detailed images of the breasts. Sometimes, to help the doctors determine the area in the breast to be imaged, cod liver capsules are taped to the breast and nipple areas.

Further information about MRI scans is available in clinic.

A breast care nurse will be in the clinic. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask to see them.

## Support Contact Numbers

### **Breast Care Nurse**

North Tyneside General Hospital  
(0191) 293 4183

### **Breast Care Nurse**

Wansbeck General Hospital  
(01670) 529319

### **Breast Care Nurse**

Hexham General Hospital  
(01434) 655386

### **Breast Practitioners**

Wansbeck General Hospital  
01670 529636

The following organisations also provide information:

### **Breast Cancer Now**

0808 800 6000 or website: [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

### **Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline**

0808 808 0000 or website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### **Cancer Research UK**

0808 800 4040 or website: [www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org)



## 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](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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