

**DEPARTMENT OF RADIOLOGY**  
**QEII Hospital**  
**Vicki Adkins Breast Unit**

**Vacuum-assisted excision biopsy of the breast using  
X-ray or Ultrasound guidance.**

**The Breast Imaging Department**

The Breast Imaging Department is a division of the Radiology Department, which carries out radiological examinations of patients using X-rays and Ultrasound. There is a multidisciplinary team of people working in the radiology Department comprised of radiologists (doctors who have been specially trained in Radiology), Radiographers, Nurses, Assistant Practitioners, Radiology Department Assistants and Clerical Staff.

**What is a vacuum-assisted excision biopsy of the breast?**

This is a method for taking a specimen of abnormal tissue under X-ray or ultrasound guidance. The vacuum biopsy provides sufficient tissue for diagnosis, avoiding the need to take the specimen by means of an operation. A vacuum assisted biopsy may also be used as a non surgical method to remove benign (non cancerous) lumps in the breast.

**Are there any risks from the procedure?**

- There may be some bleeding inside the breast and a bruise or swelling (haematoma) may form.
- When the biopsy is performed using X-ray guidance this involves the use of Ionising Radiation, however the risks are very low and are outweighed by the benefits of having this procedure.
- When this biopsy is performed to remove lumps, there is the possibility that some benign tissue will remain in the breast.

**What are the benefits?**

- The benefits from making a diagnosis and consequently giving you the right treatment outweigh any risk involved. The risk to your health from not having the examination and missing a serious disorder may be much greater.
- Surgery is avoided If a benign lump can be removed using this technique.

**Are there any precautions?**

Please inform this department **before** you come for your examination:

- If you are, or think you may be pregnant
- If you are taking tablets to thin the blood (anticoagulants)

**Preparations prior to the procedure**

- Please wash your breasts before coming to the Breast Imaging Department.
- Do not use talcum powder or deodorant as these substances may cause artefacts on the images.
- It is advisable to wear separates i.e. a skirt and top or trousers and top as you will need to undress from the waist upwards.

### Can I bring a friend/relative?

Yes you may be accompanied, but friends and relatives will not be allowed in the examination room. Due to the limited size of the waiting room we would be grateful if friends or relatives would use the waiting area in the Main reception of the Breast Unit.

### When you arrive

Please go to the Reception Desk in the Vicki Adkins Breast Unit. You will be collected by a member of staff or a volunteer and shown to a cubicle. You will be given a gown and asked to undress from the waist upwards. A basket will be provided for your belongings – please keep this with you at all times.

### What happens during the procedure?

The Radiologist will explain everything to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

**If the abnormal area can only be seen on an ultrasound image** the procedure will be performed using ultrasound guidance. You will be asked to lie on your back on a table and the Radiologist will scan the breast prior to and during the procedure.

**If the abnormal area can only be seen on a mammogram** the procedure will be performed using X-ray guidance. You will be asked to lie on your stomach on a table and the breast will be compressed in exactly the same way as for a mammogram. Images will be taken prior to and during the procedure.

Once the area has been located the surrounding skin will be numbed using local anaesthetic. A small nick will be made in the skin to assist in placing the vacuum-assisted biopsy needle close to the area. The needle, which is attached to a suction device, is then placed into the area or lump. The Radiologist uses the X-ray or ultrasound images of the area to monitor the procedure. Small amounts of tissue are collected through the needle until the required number of samples have been obtained or the lump has been removed.

A clip marker may be inserted via the needle by the Radiologist. The marker will be visible on any future X-ray or ultrasound images.

At the end of the procedure the needle device is withdrawn from the breast and the opening is pressed for a short time to stop bleeding. A small dressing will be placed over the area and it should be kept dry for 48 hours.

### Will it hurt?

You may feel some stinging as the local anaesthetic goes in, but the area will soon go numb. During the actual biopsy, you should not feel any discomfort. If a bruise or swelling forms afterwards, this may be uncomfortable for a day or two.

### How long will it take?

The procedure usually takes about 60 minutes

### Are there any side effects?

You may experience some discomfort from the biopsy site for 24 - 48 hours. You may wish to take a simple painkiller (e.g. paracetamol). **Do not take** medication which contains aspirin as this may cause a larger bruise. It may also help to wear a lightweight bra to support your breast.

### When will I get the results?

The specimen collected during the procedure will be sent to the pathology laboratory for analysis. The pathology report will be sent to your consultant and this normally takes 7 days.

### **If I have a query who should I contact?**

If you have a query please ring the Radiology Department between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, on 01707 325580

### **Public Transport**

Please visit [www.intalink.org.uk](http://www.intalink.org.uk) or phone 0300 123 4050 for details of bus and train routes, timetables and fares.

### **Health Shuttle**

Door to door journeys to Lister can be booked on the Health Shuttle from certain areas. Please phone 01438 726219 for fares and details.

### **Feedback**

The Radiology Department welcomes feedback on our service and our information leaflets. Alternatively you may wish to contact the Patients Advice & Liaison Service.

### **Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)**

Tel no. 01438 284779 (Lister)  
01707 229045 (QEII & HCH Hospitals)

**[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)**