

Patient Information – Vacuum assisted excision breast biopsy using X-ray or ultrasound guidance

Department of Radiology – New QEII Hospital

Introduction

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?

- Occasionally there may be some bleeding inside the breast and a bruise or swelling (haematoma) will 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 small risks 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 and under your arms before coming to the department.
- After washing, **do not** use talcum powder or deodorant as these substances can affect the images taken.
- It is advisable to wear separates, such as a skirt and top, or trousers and top as you will need to undress from the waist upwards.

When you arrive

You will be booked in at reception and directed to a cubicle to undress from the waist upwards and put on a hospital gown. 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 couch 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 couch 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 procedure, 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 puncture 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 at night to support your breast after the procedure.

Can I bring a relative/friend to my appointment?

Yes, a relative or a friend may accompany you to the department, but they are not usually allowed in the examination room. **Please do not bring young children with you.**

When will I receive my 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.

Feedback

When you attend your hospital appointment you should be offered the Friends and Family Test survey asking you the question, **“How likely are you to recommend our service to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?”**. We welcome your comments about what was good about your visit and what would have made your experience better. Your feedback is anonymous and is used to help improve the services we provide to all our patients.

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