

Ultrasound guided vacuum assisted mammotome (VAM) removal of a breast lump

This leaflet explains more about having an ultrasound guided removal of a breast lump, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions and concerns, please speak to a radiographer in the Breast Imaging Unit or a breast care nurse (contact numbers are included at the end of this leaflet).

What is an ultrasound guided VAM removal of a breast lump?

It is a procedure where a lump in your breast is firstly located using an ultrasound scan and then is removed using a vacuum assisted needle method called mammotomy.

What are the benefits – why should I have this procedure?

Your recent tests have shown you have a lump in your breast. You have been told that your breast lump can be removed either by an operation in the Day Surgery Unit or by vacuum mammotomy (VAM) in the Breast Imaging Unit and have discussed these options with a member of the breast surgery team.

A VAM removal of a breast lump is a minor surgical procedure that can be performed as an outpatient with the use of local anaesthetic. It does not require you to have a general anaesthetic or to stay in hospital for a longer period of time. If you would like to discuss your options again, please contact the breast care nurses on the contact number at the end of this leaflet.

What are the risks?

Complications from VAM removal are rare. However, as with any procedure there are some risks associated with it. They include:

- Internal bruising (haematoma) in the breast following the procedure. We try and minimise internal bruising by placing firm pressure on the breast immediately after the biopsy.
- Bleeding from the wound site. Rarely the biopsy site can start to bleed after you have left the unit. We will give you instructions on what to do if this happens.
- Infection of the wound site. The wound will be covered with a sterile dressing after the procedure and we will advise how to look after the area.
- Scarring to the skin – it is normal to expect a scar over the needle entry site. This can measure up to 1cm. In some cases women are more inclined to develop raised scars (keloid scars). In rare cases, skin damage can be caused at another site on the breast due to suction from the biopsy needle.

- Incomplete removal – it may not always be possible to remove the entire lump using this method.

If you would like to discuss the risks of this test further please contact the breast care nurses on the contact numbers at the end of the sheet.

Are there any alternatives?

An alternative to a VAM removal is called a surgical excision, where the removal of the lump is performed in an operating theatre under general anaesthetic. It will leave a larger scar and although it is performed as day surgery, it requires a longer time in hospital to recover.

How can I prepare for the procedure?

- You can eat and drink normally before and after.
- Medicines – if you are taking any antiplatelet medicines (for example, aspirin, clopidogrel) or any medicines that thin the blood (for example, warfarin or rivaroxaban), please call the breast care nurses on 020 7188 0869 for advice as soon as you get your appointment letter as these may need to be stopped temporarily before the procedure.
- If you are allergic to any medication, particularly local anaesthetic, please contact us as soon as possible after receiving your appointment letter.
- Please tell us if there is any possibility that you are pregnant.
- On the day of your appointment please do not wear deodorant, powder, lotion or perfume on your breasts and underarm areas.
- On the day of your appointment please wear separates so that you can undress to the waist easily.
- Please bring with you a supportive bra, such as a sports bra, to wear afterwards.
- Relatives and escorts – if possible please bring a friend or relative to accompany you home. This may also be useful if you do not understand English very well or if you have any special needs. If you require an interpreter to attend your appointment please contact the Language Support Service (contact numbers are at the end of this sheet).
- Children – we are unable to offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them whilst your examination is being carried out.
- Driving – we recommend that you do not drive for the rest of the day.
- If possible please arrange time off work on the day of the procedure. Please expect to be in our department for up to two hours.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the test and that you understand what is involved.

You should read the leaflet, **Helping you decide: our consent policy** which gives you more information. Please ask a member of the staff caring for you for a copy.

The day of your procedure

When you arrive for your appointment please report all medications that you are taking to the doctor.

What happens during the procedure?

- The procedure takes place in the ultrasound room and you will be awake for the entire test, which normally lasts approximately 40 minutes. The procedure will be performed by a specially trained radiologist.
- You will be asked to undress to the waist and lay on the ultrasound couch. The vacuum biopsy machine and ultrasound machine will be positioned next to the couch.
- The radiologist will firstly perform an ultrasound scan of the breast to locate the breast lump.
- Local anaesthetic will then be injected into the skin and then into the tissues around the lump to ensure the rest of the procedure will be painless.
- Once the local anaesthetic has been given time to work, a small cut (5mm) is made in the skin. The vacuum biopsy needle is placed through the cut and positioned under the breast lump, using the ultrasound machine to guide it into position.
- The lump will then be removed in several pieces using the vacuum system. The needle stays in the breast while the pieces are removed by the vacuum. Once the lump has been removed the needle will be removed and firm compression will be placed over the cut in the skin for about 15 minutes to help minimise bruising.
- The tissue pieces will be sent to the pathology department for examination.

Will I feel any pain?

Local anaesthetic may cause stinging before it numbs the breast but this should only last for a few seconds. You may feel some pressure on the breast during the procedure but should not feel any pain. If you do feel pain tell the radiologist and more local anaesthetic will be introduced to the breast.

What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the procedure we will apply firm pressure to the breast for 15 minutes. This will help to minimise the risk of developing internal bruising in the breast (haematoma). A paper stitch (steristrip) and a sterile dressing will be placed over the small cut in the skin and on some occasions a pressure bandage will also be applied.

Once you are dressed we will ask you to stay in the department for about 30 minutes after your biopsy so that we can ensure that you feel comfortable enough to leave the department. We can make you a hot drink so please ask us if you would like one.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You should take it easy and rest as much as possible for the remaining part of the day. Please avoid any strenuous activities, such as heavy lifting, running or going to the gym for the following two days but you can start your usual day to day activities. If your work is physical then we advise you to carry out light duties for the next two days. If this is not possible then we advise you to take two days off work.

We recommend you wear a supportive bra day and night for two days. You may find a soft sports bra is more comfortable than an underwired bra for the first few days after the procedure. If you have a pressure bandage applied we will give you instructions on how long to wear this for.

The anaesthetic will wear off after two to three hours. If you then find your breast uncomfortable or painful take a mild painkiller such as paracetamol, following the instructions on the pack. Avoid taking aspirin or ibuprofen as these may cause extra bruising in the breast.

You will be left with a permanent small scar on the skin (about the size of a freckle) at the site of the biopsy.

Detailed aftercare advice is included in our leaflet, **Going home after your vacuum biopsy**. Please ask for a copy if you have not received one before you go home after your procedure.

What should I do if I have a problem?

It is common to have some bruising and swelling for several days after the procedure. Rarely the biopsy site can start to bleed after you have gone home. If this happens, apply pressure to the breast over the biopsy site for 15 minutes in the same way as was done straight after the biopsy. If the bleeding continues after this please continue to apply pressure to the area and contact us on one of the numbers at the end of this leaflet or to your local A&E.

When will I receive my results?

The results will not be given to you immediately after the procedure. The tissue samples collected will be sent to the lab for analysis – this takes about one week. You will be contacted by the breast clinic when the results are ready. If you have not heard from the breast clinic two weeks after the procedure, please contact them on 020 7188 1483.

Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact us

If you have any questions before your appointment, please contact:

Breast radiology – 020 7188 5574
Breast care nurses – 020 7188 0869
(Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

If you have any questions / problems after your appointment, please contact:

Breast radiology – 020 7188 5574
Breast clinic – 020 7188 1483
(Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'

t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017

e: members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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