

# The breast clinic

**This leaflet will give you some general information about the clinic. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## Our service

Our team provides specialist advice on all breast problems, both benign (not cancer) and malignant (cancer), in women and men.

The clinic is designed to speed up the process of diagnosing your breast problems, by carrying out triple assessment (clinical examination, mammograms and ultrasound, as needed) on a single visit. We aim to give you either a diagnosis, or a plan of care, before you leave the clinic. This will be done by looking at the results of your clinical examination and, where possible, all the necessary investigations.

Your visit to the clinic could mean spending 2 to 3 hours in the department, so you may want to bring something to read. Some patients may have problems that take a long time to sort out, which can increase your waiting time. We think it is important that all patients are given the time that they need. Coming for an outpatient appointment can be stressful. We advise that you bring a friend or relative to support you, and help you to remember the information you are given.

The breast clinic is not a walk-in service. If you have any concerns, please visit your GP or go to the Emergency Department (A&E).

## Things to bring with you for your appointment:

- Records of previous breast examinations or tests (such as X-rays or mammograms), if you have any
- A list of current prescription, herbal, or over-the-counter medicines that you are taking.

## Arriving at the clinic

The clinic is located on 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Tower Wing, at Guy's Hospital. The receptionist will give you some forms to fill in, and complete your registration. You will then be asked to sit in the waiting area until your name is called by one of the clinicians.

## Your consultation

New patients are seen by either a breast surgeon or an advanced nurse practitioner. You will be asked some questions about your general health and your breast problem. You will have a physical examination of your breasts. At the end of your consultation, you will have your problem explained to you, and will be informed about any investigations you may need.

We have male and female doctors working in the clinic. If you are being examined by a male doctor, there will be a nursing assistant present. If you wish to be examined by a female member of the team, please let us know before you come to the clinic for your appointment. We will try to arrange this if possible.

As this is a teaching hospital, students might be present at the consultation to learn how to take a medical history and carry out a breast examination. This is an important part of their training and they will be supervised by qualified staff. Please tell us if you do not want students to be present – it will not affect your care in any way.

## Investigations

A number of investigations may be necessary to help us diagnose your problem. These investigations take place in the breast imaging department. These may include one or more of the following.

### Mammogram

This is an X-ray of the breast which involves compressing the breasts between 2 X-ray plates. This may cause minor discomfort.

### Breast ultrasound

This is an ultrasound scan that uses sound waves to provide a picture of the breast tissue. A jelly-like substance is smeared onto the area to be examined and a small probe is placed over your breast so that images can be seen on the monitor. The examination is painless.

### Breast biopsy

If an abnormal area is seen on the ultrasound scan or mammogram, a biopsy may be needed. This will involve taking some cells or tissue to send to the pathology laboratory for examination. The biopsy can be taken in 2 ways:

- Fine needle aspiration cytology. A few cells can be removed from the breast using a needle and syringe. This will feel like a normal injection.
- A core needle biopsy: Tissue samples are removed using a hollow needle. The area will be covered with a small dressing which can be removed a day later.

Both of the above procedures are minor and may involve having a local anaesthetic, which numbs the area. You may have a bruise for a few days after the procedure.

Before the biopsy, you will be given written information on what to expect.

## Getting your results

You will be seen by a doctor or advanced nurse practitioner to receive the results of your tests. If possible, this will be before you leave the clinic.

You may be discharged and have no further visits to the clinic. However, if you have a biopsy, you will be asked to come back within a week for the result, or the doctor or nurse will write to you with the information.

We will write to your GP following your appointment and send a copy of the letter to any other health professionals involved in your care. You will also receive a copy of this letter.

## Breast care nurses

Specialist breast care nurses are available in all clinics. If you have received a diagnosis of breast cancer and have any concerns, they can be contacted (details at the end of this leaflet).

## Taking part in medical research studies

Our hospitals have a long tradition of making significant medical breakthroughs and developing new treatments. We hope that research carried out in our hospitals will not only improve care for our patients, but will also benefit others.

The breast unit is actively involved in clinical trials, audits and service improvement projects all aimed at making sure that our patients receive the best possible care. You may be asked to take part in one of our clinical trials or projects. We hope you will agree, but if you do not wish to take part, we will respect your decision and this will not affect your care in any way.

## Donating tissue for medical research

Medical research is vital to help us understand diseases and to develop better treatments. Almost anyone who has had pathology tests on cells or tissue can take part in medical research.

When samples are taken for diagnosis, there are often cells or tissue left over after the tests are done. Some of this extra material is stored and the rest is discarded. Scientists can use this leftover material for current and future research. You will be asked if we could use your leftover pathology specimens for research purposes.

If you are having a biopsy taken, you may be asked if we could take some extra tissue specifically for research purposes at the same time.

More information about tissue donation is available in the clinic.

Please be reassured that we will respect your wishes and, if you decide not to take part, it will not affect your treatment in any way.

## Tell us about your experience

We will always try to make your visit to our hospital as stress-free as possible. Please speak to a member of the team caring for you if you have any suggestions that may help us improve our service and provide the best possible care.

## Useful sources of information

**Breast Cancer Care**, [web: www.breastcancercare.org](http://www.breastcancercare.org)

**Macmillan Cancer Support**, [web: www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

You should have received the leaflet, **Your outpatient visit to Guy's**, containing details of the facilities available at the hospital, including places where you can buy food and drink. If you have not received this leaflet, please ask a member of staff for a copy.

### Contact us

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about your visit to the breast clinic. If you want to change your appointment, please contact our 2-week wait (2ww) booking office, [tel: 020 7188 0902](tel:02071880902). If you are running late for your appointment, [tel: 020 7188 1483](tel:02071881483). For any other outpatient clinic queries, please [tel: 020 7188 0881/ 7589](tel:02071880881), or [020 7188 7188](tel:02071887188), extension 53480.

For information on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, [web: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

**Dimbleby Cancer Care** provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

We are in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's,  
**tel:** 020 7188 5918, **email:** DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk

### 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, **tel:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm,  
**email:** mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **tel:** 020 7188 8801, **email:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint, contact the complaints department, **tel:** 020 7188 3514, **email:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **tel:** 020 7188 8815, **email:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

### NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **tel:** 111,  
**web:** www.111.nhs.uk

### NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web:** www.nhs.uk

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch, **tel:** 0800 731 0319, **email:** members@gstt.nhs.uk, **web:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

### Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we want to hear from you. Fill in our simple online form, **web:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **email:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk