Having a bone biopsy in the Interventional Radiology (IR) Department

This leaflet will explain what a bone biopsy is, and why you have been sent for one. Please read this leaflet carefully.

What is a bone biopsy?
A bone biopsy is a minor procedure performed under x-ray guidance (either in the CT scanner or fluoroscopy room). The x-rays show the IR doctor exactly where to place the special bone biopsy needle. A small sample of abnormal bone is then removed. The bone sample is sent to the lab for a formal diagnosis to be made.

What are the benefits of having a bone biopsy?
Having a biopsy will help your doctor to make a correct diagnosis so that you can get suitable treatment. Your doctor will explain to you what they want to be biopsied and why.

What are the risks of having a bone biopsy?
Problems from a bone biopsy are rare, but the following can occur.
- There may be mild discomfort (aching) around the biopsy site for the first few hours after the procedure. This discomfort is usually well controlled with simple tablets (like paracetamol).
- There is a very small chance of skin or bone infection. If these happen, then this will be treated with antibiotics.
- There is a small risk of bleeding after the biopsy. The biopsy needle is very small. Some medications, as well as some bone tumours or other bone conditions, can increase the risk of bleeding after a biopsy. This is why you will need to stay in the IR Department for at least four hours after the procedure, so the nurses can keep an eye on you. There may be minor bruising around the biopsy area, but serious bleeding is very rare.
- There is a very small chance that the biopsy needle may break (fracture) the bone or injure a nerve, blood vessel, or organ near the biopsy site. This is rare and may be related to the bone problem. If this happens, then your doctor will advise you about it and whether any other treatments are necessary.

What is IR?
Interventional radiologists are specialist doctors who perform procedures all over the body. They use different imaging machines, such as ultrasound or CT, to show them exactly where to go inside the body. Using ultrasound or CT avoids the need for large surgical incisions, and is very safe, as important structures can be clearly seen in real time.
IR doctors work in a team along with IR specialist nurses and radiographers. The whole team will look after you during your biopsy and recovery.

**Who will perform the biopsy?**
A specially trained interventional radiologist (doctor) will perform the biopsy. The IR doctor will be assisted by specialist IR nurses who will look after you before, during and after the biopsy. Radiographers will operate the specialist x-ray equipment.

**Consent – asking for your consent**
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 treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

**Before your biopsy**
We will arrange for you to have some simple blood tests. The doctor needs to see a list of all of your medications (tablets, inhalers, creams), so please bring a copy of your current prescription with you.

Sometimes, certain medicines need to be stopped before your procedure, specifically blood thinning medications such as warfarin or clopidogrel and also medications for diabetes such as Metformin or Glibenclamide. The IR doctor or nurse will be able to advise you whether you need to stop any medicines, and also when to restart them after your procedure.

**What happens on the day of the biopsy?**
- Do not eat or drink anything (except water) for six hours before the procedure. You can drink water up to two hours before the procedure. Eating and drinking before your procedure will cause delays to it.
- Please arrive 60 minutes before your appointment time to allow sufficient time for preparation. You will need to get changed into a hospital gown and the IR doctor will go through your medications again with you.
- You will be asked to sign a hospital consent form, agreeing to have the procedure, and you can ask any questions that you may have.
- At least one family member or friend (maximum of two please) should accompany you to the hospital and they should be able to keep an eye on you for 24 hours afterwards.
- If you come to hospital with family or friends, we have limited space in our department. They may be asked to wait in the main x-ray reception.

**What happens during the biopsy?**
- You will be taken into the procedure room by the nurse. At least two nurses and a doctor will be with you at all times.
- The biopsy procedure is performed under local anaesthetic (you are awake, but will only feel minimal discomfort). Sometimes sedation medicine or stronger painkillers are given into a vein to make you drowsy.
The doctor will position you to make the biopsy as easy as possible. The nurses will check your blood pressure and pulse throughout the procedure. They will make sure that you are as comfortable as possible. The x-ray machine or CT scanner, used to guide the doctor, will pass over you but will not touch you.

The biopsy is performed through the skin and directly into the bone. A special bone biopsy needle is used to take the biopsy. You will have a small dressing over the biopsy site afterwards. No stiches are required.

A bone biopsy is very quick. The whole procedure will take around 30 to 45 minutes due safety checks and preparation.

What happens after the biopsy?

- You will usually need to stay in hospital for four hours after the procedure for us to observe you. The IR nurse will let you know when you can eat and drink after your biopsy.
- If all your checks are normal, most patients can go home the same day as their biopsy.
- You will need a responsible adult to take you home by car or taxi. We do not recommend using public transport, in case you feel unwell. If you need to arrange hospital transport, please call 020 7188 2888.
- We recommend that you have an adult to stay with you overnight.
- Do not drive for 24 hours after the procedure, and not until you feel safe to drive.
- Avoid any strenuous exercise or lifting for 48 hours after the procedure.
- Simple painkillers (like paracetamol) might be useful for any post-biopsy discomfort.
- The doctor who referred you to have the biopsy will arrange a follow-up with you to discuss the biopsy results. The biopsy results usually take at least one week from the lab.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns not answered by this leaflet, please contact the IR Department, t: 020 7188 5525 for Guy’s, or t: 020 7188 5477 for St Thomas’ Hospital.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered

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

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

Ph: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
Ph: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: 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. Ph: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk