Having an ultrasound-guided core biopsy of the breast

This leaflet explains more about having an ultrasound-guided core biopsy of the breast, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also gives information on what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions, please speak to a radiologist or sonographer in the breast imaging unit, or one of the breast care nurses (details at the end of this leaflet).

What is an ultrasound-guided core biopsy of the breast?
It is a procedure where a small sample of tissue is removed from the breast, so that it can be examined under a microscope. An ultrasound machine is used to locate the area of the breast that needs examination, and to guide the biopsy needle to the correct position.

Core biopsies are done by radiologists and sonographers.

What are the benefits?
If changes in your breasts are detected by either a mammogram or ultrasound scan, the breast consultant will need a cell sample (FNA) or tissue sample (biopsy) to identify what is causing the changes. These samples can be analysed under a microscope and the results can help to confirm the diagnosis.

What are the risks?
Sometimes, after a biopsy, there is some bleeding inside the breast and a bruise or swelling (haematoma) will form. Care is taken during the procedure to minimise the risk of infection. Care is also taken that the needle does not pass beyond the breast through the chest wall. This is especially important if a lump is situated at the back of a small breast.

Are there any other options?
Another test you might be offered is a diagnostic excision biopsy. This is done in the operating theatre under general anaesthetic. It is surgery to remove the area of abnormality from the breast. As well as removing the abnormality, the surgeon will remove a small rim of normal tissue around it, called a margin. This procedure will leave a scar and the recovery time is longer.
How you can prepare for a core biopsy

There are no special preparations for this procedure. You can eat and drink normally before and after. However:

- Please let us know if you are taking any antiplatelet medicines (such as aspirin or clopidogrel) or any medicines that thin the blood (for example, warfarin), as they may need to be stopped temporarily, before the procedure. Please let the radiologist know before the procedure starts, or call the breast care nurses, t: 020 7188 0869 for advice as soon as you get your appointment letter.
- Please let the doctor know about all of the medicines you are taking, including anything that you buy yourself over the counter, and any herbal or homeopathic medicines.
- If you are allergic to any medication (particularly local anaesthetic) please contact us as soon as possible after receiving your appointment.
- On the day of your appointment do not wear deodorant, powder, lotion or perfume on your breasts and underarm areas, as these can affect the accuracy of your results.
- Try to 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. Although your friend or relative might not be allowed into the examination room, they can be a valuable source of support for you on the day. If you need an interpreter for your appointment, please contact the language support service, t: 020 7188 8815.
- Please be aware that we cannot offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them while your examination is being done.

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.

During the procedure

The procedure should last no longer than 20 minutes and is done in an ultrasound room. You should be prepared, however, to be in the department for longer in case there are delays, or you want to take time to rest and recover after the procedure.

Once you are in the examination room, you will be asked to remove all of your clothes from the waist up and lie on the examination couch.

An ultrasound scan of the breast will be done first to locate the area that needs to be sampled.

The radiologist or sonographer will then clean the area of the breast that is going to be examined, before injecting a local anaesthetic to numb the area.

Once the area is numb, a very small cut (3-4mm long) is made so that the biopsy needle can be inserted into the breast. The ultrasound machine is used to guide the needle into the correct position. The spring-loaded biopsy needle is passed quickly into the breast, producing a clicking noise. A narrow core of tissue is taken up into the needle, before the needle is removed. This process may be repeated 2-4 times.
When enough samples have been taken and the procedure is finished, firm compression will be applied to the breast biopsy site by a member of staff for 5 minutes to help reduce the risk of bruising. A paper stitch (Steri-Strip) will be placed over the puncture site and covered with a sterile, waterproof dressing. (Keep this dressing on for 3 days. On the fourth day you should remove the dressing and steristrips.) After the dressing has been applied, you can get dressed. A quiet room is available in the department if you need some time to rest after the procedure.

**Will you feel any pain?**
During the procedure the local anaesthetic may cause some 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 you should not feel any pain. If you do feel pain, tell the radiologist or sonographer and more local anaesthetic will be used.

Once the local anaesthetic wears off, after 2-3 hours, your breast may be tender or painful. If the area becomes particularly uncomfortable take a mild over-the-counter painkiller, such as paracetamol, following the instructions on the pack. Avoid taking a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen, or medicines that contain aspirin, as these could cause bruising in the breast.

**After the procedure**
The samples will be sent to be analysed. Your results are usually back within 1 week.

**What you need to do after you go home**
You can go back to normal activities straight away but should avoid anything strenuous, such as heavy lifting, jogging, and aerobics for the rest of the day. If your work is physical we advise light duties only for the rest of the day, then back to normal duties the next day.

If you take any antiplatelet medicines (such as aspirin or clopidogrel) or that thin the blood (such as warfarin) you may need to stop taking them for a short time after the procedure. The radiologist/radiographer will discuss this with you before you go home. If you have any questions about your medication after your procedure, call the breast care nurses, t: 020 7188 0869.

Take any other normal medication as prescribed unless you have been advised otherwise.

The dressing needs to be kept on the breast for 3 days, then it can be removed and no further dressings are needed. While the dressing is on, you can shower and bathe as normal, as it is waterproof. Please refer to the aftercare sheet given to you after the procedure for more information.

**What to do if you have a problem**
You may notice some bruising at the puncture site. This is to be expected after a biopsy and will subside over the 7-10 days.

Bleeding or swelling is rare but, if it does happen, please follow these instructions:
- Remove the dressing from the puncture site and apply pressure to the biopsy site.
- Do this firmly by pressing with the palm of your hand for 10 minutes using either tissues or a paper kitchen towel in the same way the nurse pressed immediately after the biopsy.
- If the bleeding or swelling continues after 15 minutes you should go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E)/minor injuries unit, taking this leaflet with you.
Will you have a follow-up appointment?
If you have come for your core biopsy via an appointment at the Breast Unit One Stop Clinic, you will receive your results by post or you will be asked to return to the Breast Unit once all your tests have been completed. The breast consultant will discuss when you should expect to receive your results.

If you have come for an outpatient appointment you will receive the results from your consultant at your next appointment. Please make sure that an appointment is arranged for you to come in and discuss the results.

Contact us
If you have any questions before your appointment, please contact the breast imaging coordinator, t: 020 7188 8317, or one of the breast care nurses, t: 020 7188 0869, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

If you have any questions/problems after your appointment, please contact the Breast Unit One Stop Clinic, t: 020 7188 1483.

If you have a significant medical problem out of hours, contact your GP. If it is an emergency, call 999 for an ambulance.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, w: 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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@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.
t: 111 w: 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.
w: www.nhs.uk

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