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 (details 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.

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 assisted 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 (details 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 this by placing firm pressure on the breast immediately after the procedure.
- infection of the needle entry site. This area will be covered with a sterile dressing after the procedure, and we will tell you how to look after it.
- 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 (keloid) scars. In rare cases, skin damage can occur somewhere else on the breast. This is due to suction from the vacuum assisted needle used during the procedure.
- 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 speak to the breast care nurses.
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?
- 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), call the breast care nurses 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.
- Tell us if there is any possibility that you are pregnant.
- On the day of your appointment, do not wear deodorant, powder, lotion or perfume on your breasts and underarm areas.
- On the day of your appointment, wear separates so that you can undress to the waist easily.
- Bring with you a supportive bra, such as a sports bra, to wear afterwards.
- Relatives and escorts – if possible, 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 (details 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 while your procedure is being carried out.
- Driving – we recommend that you do not drive for the rest of the day.
- If possible, arrange time off work on the day of the procedure. Please expect to be in our department for up to two hours.

Giving – asking for 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 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.

The day of your procedure
When you arrive for your appointment, tell the doctor all medications that you are taking.

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 assisted equipment will be positioned next to the couch beside the ultrasound machine.
- 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 up measuring up to (1cm) 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 up to 15 minutes to help minimise bruising (haematoma).
• 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 given.

**What happens after the procedure?**
A paper stitch (steristrip), a sterile waterproof dressing, and on some occasions a pressure bandage, will be placed over the small cut in the skin. You will need to keep this dressing on for three days. On the fourth day you should remove the dressing and steristrip.

Once you are dressed we will ask you to stay in the department for about 30 minutes 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.

Once the anaesthetic wears off after two to three 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.

Pain and discomfort usually subside after one week. If you are experiencing pain for longer than one week or are concerned, please contact a breast care nurse. You will be left with a permanent small scar on the skin at the site of the biopsy.

The needle entry site can bleed after you have gone home, however this is rare. If this happens, apply pressure to the breast over the needle entry site for 15 minutes in the same way the nurse pressed immediately after the procedure. **If bleeding continues after this time, please continue to apply pressure to the area and contact us on one of the numbers at the end of this leaflet, or go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).**
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.

**When will I receive my results?**
The results will not be given to you immediately after the procedure. The tissue samples will be sent to the pathology department 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 after two weeks, please contact them, **t: 020 7188 1483**.

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**Contact us**

If you have any questions before your appointment, please contact:
Breast radiology, **t: 020 7188 5574**
Breast care nurses, **t: 020 7188 0869**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

If you have any questions/problems after your appointment, please contact:
Breast radiology, **t: 020 7188 5574**
Breast clinic, **t: 020 7188 1483**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

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

**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**

**Language support services**

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

**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**