Breast Unit

Therapeutic Vacuum Breast Excision

What will this procedure involve and how will it help?
We have found an area of abnormality in your breast and we would like to perform a needle (rather than a surgical operation under general anaesthetic) because either:

(a) you would like the area to be removed, or
(b) we would like more tissue so that it can be looked at further in the pathology laboratory.

Who will perform my procedure?
This will be done, or very closely supervised, by an expert clinician.

How will this procedure be done?
This will be performed using either ultrasound or X-ray guidance, similar to that used in your original diagnostic biopsy.

Will the procedure hurt?
We use local anaesthetic via a small needle into the skin and breast tissue. This might sting for a few seconds until it takes effect. We will need to make a small nick in the skin to introduce the needle. The needle we use to take the biopsy tissue makes a small noise but most patients report that this does not cause them any significant discomfort.

How much breast tissue will be removed?
We will remove several small pieces of breast tissue to be sure we have removed the visible area of abnormality. The tissue is obtained by suction and the needle stays in place throughout the procedure.

At the end of the procedure we will insert a tiny piece of metal, called a clip, to mark the biopsy area. This is in case you need any further tests or surgery after we have the results of the biopsy and to help us when you return for any further breast imaging, either here in Cambridge or elsewhere. This marker can stay in your breast and will give you no problems, for example for subsequent MRI scans or metal-detector systems.

After the procedure
You may eat and drink as normal following this procedure. You can leave hospital shortly after the procedure once this has been agreed by the doctor treating you. Usually, you can resume normal activities immediately following the procedure.
A small dressing will be applied to your breast. The gauze can be removed after 24 hours but it is advisable to keep the skin closures in place for three or four days. If you experience any pain and/or discomfort, we advise that you take a mild pain killer such as paracetamol (panadol). Avoid aspirin as this could encourage bleeding.

**Are there any side effects?**

Most commonly after this procedure, you might experience some bruising or bleeding around the area. We try to reduce this by applying some hand pressure at the time. Please tell the doctor if you have any disorders of bleeding/clotting or if you take anticoagulant tablets (for example, medicines that thin the blood). If the wound starts to bleed again, apply firm pressure for several minutes. More severe side effects or problems such as infection are extremely rare.

**When will I get the result?**

We aim to get the result of this test ready for you within a week. We will arrange an appointment before you leave us on the day of the procedure. This appointment is timed so that you will see the most appropriate doctor.

**Alternative procedures that are available**

A surgical operation could be performed to remove the abnormal area but this involves coming into hospital for the day, a general anaesthetic and will leave a surgical scar. To guide the surgeon to the correct site, a needle would still need to be placed in the breast, using the X-ray machine or ultrasound before the operation.

An alternative to this needle biopsy or a surgical biopsy is to decide to wait and see if this area changes or grows. We will discuss with you the implications of not having a biopsy.

**Information and support**

The breast care specialist nursing team 01223 596291/586960, is available to answer any questions after your biopsy and while you are waiting for your results. After the biopsy you will meet one of the team who will give you his/her card with contact details.

There are currently no national leaflets specifically about needle biopsy, but the Breast Cancer Care website is easy to use with lots of general information.

[www.breastcancercare.org](http://www.breastcancercare.org)
We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history

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