

South West London Breast Screening Service

Breast Needle Biopsy

This leaflet explains needle biopsy, including the risks and what you can expect if you require a biopsy. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a needle biopsy?

A needle biopsy is a tissue sample (**Core Biopsy**) or a cell sample (**Fine Needle Aspiration**) taken from the breast for testing in the laboratory.

What is involved?

The Doctor or Practitioner will use the ultrasound or mammogram machine to locate the area of breast tissue that needs to be sampled. This procedure can be done with you lying down or sitting, depending on the area to be sampled.

Core Biopsy

The Doctor or Practitioner will inject local anaesthetic into your breast through a very fine needle. The injection will feel like a pinprick and may sting before that part of your breast goes numb. The doctor will then make a tiny cut in the skin through which the sampling needle is passed. As each tissue sample is taken the needle holder makes a loud 'click'. This should not be painful but you may feel a 'pushing sensation'. Several samples will be taken.

After the samples are taken, adhesive strips will be used to close the small cut on your breast and this will then be covered with a dressing. The adhesive strips and dressing should be left on and kept dry for two to three days, after which you may then remove them.

Fine Needle Aspiration

The Doctor or Practitioner will inject local anaesthetic through a very fine needle. S/he will then use a fine needle and syringe (like that used for a blood test) to take some cells from your breast. This should not be painful but you may be aware of some movement.

After the cell sample is taken, a small plaster or dressing will be used to cover the area and you may remove this the next day.

What can I expect after the test?

As with any medical procedure there may be some side effects. Not everyone has side effects but some women may experience more than one.

Bruising

Bruising may occur; this is most common after a core biopsy. Bruising may make that part of your breast feel lumpy or may affect a wider area. Some people find that Arnica may help to lessen bruising.

On rare occasions there can be severe bruising following a biopsy and this may affect most of the breast and can take several weeks to resolve.

Discomfort

Any aching or tenderness in your breast should be relieved by taking a painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Avoid taking aspirin for the first 24 hours. Wearing a comfortable bra may also help. It is wise to avoid heavy lifting or exercise for the rest of the day and you may continue to get brief episodes of pain or discomfort in the breast, sometimes many months after the biopsy.

Bleeding

Very occasionally the biopsy site can start bleeding again after you have left the screening unit. If this happens, apply firm pressure over the area for 20 minutes. Contact your GP or the screening unit if the bleeding has not stopped after 20 minutes. If you are unable to contact your GP or the screening unit, please seek advice from your local NHS Walk-In-Centre or A&E department.

Will I have a follow-up appointment for my result?

You will be given an appointment to come back for your result the following week. Occasionally the result may be delayed and if this happens, we will attempt to contact you to arrange a new appointment.

If you have an appointment to see a breast surgeon you will not need to come back to our unit for results as we will ensure that the surgeon has a copy of your results. The results will be discussed with you at your appointment.

Breast Marker

Sometimes the small area of breast tissue being sampled may be completely removed during the needle biopsy. When this happens it is sensible to mark that part of the breast using a tiny metal clip. This is done in case any further investigations are required later.

The marker clip is inserted as part of the biopsy procedure after the samples have been taken. Inserting it is painless as the breast will still be numb from the local anaesthetic.

You will not be able to feel the marker clip and you will not be aware that it is in your breast. It will stay in your breast and will not cause you any harm. It will be seen on any future breast ultrasound scans or breast x-rays (mammograms) that you have done. Although made of metal, the marker clip is MRI compatible which means that if you ever need an MRI scan the marker clip will not cause any problem.

As the marker clip is made of metal it is important for you to tell us if you have any allergies to metal before this procedure.

Research

St George's University is committed to taking part in research to improve patient outcomes. You may be invited to participate in this research during your clinic appointment. The research projects we are currently involved with include *LORIS* and if you have a biopsy for calcification you may be given a leaflet about this trial.

100k Genome Project. If you require a biopsy, you may be approached by one of the genetics team to invite you to participate in the 100,000 Genomes Project. As with all research, participation is entirely your choice and your decision to participate will in no way effect your care.

Contact us

If you have any questions after the biopsy please contact our Clinical Nurse Specialists Monday to Friday, on **020 8725 2726** (24 hour answer phone).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: BRS_NB_04 **Published:** May 2024 **Review date:** May 2026