

## Core biopsy of the breast

### What is a core biopsy of the breast?

A core biopsy of the breast is a test which involves taking a small sample of tissue from an abnormal area in the breast.

If the abnormality can be easily felt, the core biopsy will be performed in the outpatient department by one of the doctors. If the abnormality is not easily felt, the Radiologist (x-ray doctor) will use an ultrasound scan to guide them to the abnormality. The same procedure (described below) is followed, except that in addition the ultrasound scanner is used.

The biopsy itself doesn't take very long to perform and usually the whole process is finished in 15 to 20 minutes.

After cleaning the skin, the area is numbed using a local anaesthetic, which may sting briefly. A small 'nick' may be made in the skin to assist in placing the biopsy needle close to the abnormality. The needle is attached to a small device which quickly fires the needle into the abnormality taking a narrow tubular core of tissue. The device makes a loud clicking noise (we will let you hear the noise first so it does not take you by surprise). This process may be repeated several times to ensure an adequate sample is obtained. You may feel a slight discomfort and a sensation of pressure for a short time. The tissue sample will then be sent to an experienced pathologist who will be able to make a diagnosis by studying the sample under a microscope.

You will be able to go home after the procedure and return to normal activities.

### What are the potential risks and side effects?

Your breast may be sore afterwards. You may take your usual non-prescription painkiller you use at home, if needed, however it is best to avoid aspirin and ibuprofen as these can cause bleeding. Wearing a support bra may help ease the discomfort.

Bruising can occur after the biopsy which can take a few weeks to resolve. Very occasionally there may be some bleeding inside the breast which causes a large bruise and swelling (haematoma). This will resolve itself in a few weeks.

Any procedure where the skin is penetrated carries a risk of infection. Care will be taken to reduce this small risk.

Performing a biopsy of tissue located deep within the breast carries a slight risk that the needle will pass through the chest wall, allowing air to enter leading to a collapsed lung. It must be emphasised that this is a very rare occurrence.

Unfortunately, not all biopsies are successful. This may be because, despite taking every possible care, the piece of tissue which has actually been obtained is normal breast tissue rather than abnormal. Alternatively, although abnormal tissue has been obtained, it may not be enough for the pathologist to make a definite diagnosis.

Despite these possible complications, a core biopsy is normally very safe and is designed to save you from having a bigger procedure.

## What should I do before the procedure?

No special preparations are required.

**Important:** if you are taking Anticoagulants (tablets to thin your blood e.g. Warfarin or Clopidogrel) please tell the doctor performing the biopsy. If you are having the biopsy performed in the radiology (x-ray and ultrasound) department please inform them immediately you receive the appointment.

## How should I care for my breast after the core biopsy?

The biopsy site will be covered with a light dressing which should stay on for 24 hours. It is advisable to keep it dry during that time.

After 24 hours the dressing can be removed and you will be able to bath and shower. The area can be washed gently and patted dry. Try not to rub the area. If you have paper steri-strips applied they can be gently peeled off in the bath or shower after two to three days. Don't worry if they come off before.

## What should I look out for?

Please contact your General Practitioner (GP) if you notice any of the following:

- Increased pain that is not relieved by simple pain killers.
- Heat, redness or discharge at the biopsy site.
- A high temperature.
- Acute shortness of breath.

## When will I get the results?

A breast clinic appointment will be made for 7 to 14 days' time to discuss the result.

## Sources of information

### Breast Cancer Now

Breast Cancer Now is a national organisation which produces information on breast health. Patient information leaflets are available at: [www.breastcancernow.org.uk](http://www.breastcancernow.org.uk) or by phoning 0845800 6000 (or Tynetalk prefix 18001).

### Conquest Hospital:

Miss Shah's secretary	Tel: 0300 131 5056
Mr Subramanian's secretary	Tel: 0300 131 5057.
Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists:	Tel: 0300 131 4834 or 0300 131 4833

### Eastbourne DGH:

Mr Allan and Mr Subramanian's secretary	Tel: 0300 131 5387
Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists	Tel: 0300 131 4604

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 734731 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand Hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other Formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

**Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Reference

The Breast Multidisciplinary Teams and patient support groups have agreed this leaflet

Next review date: November 2023  
Responsible clinician: Lis Grimsey, Macmillan Consultant Nurse

© East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://www.esht.nhs.uk)