

After your biopsy of the breast

Introduction

This leaflet is designed to give you information about aftercare following a biopsy of the breast. We hope it will answer the questions that you or those who care for you may have. This leaflet is not meant to replace the consultation between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed.

Bruising

When the local anaesthetic has worn off, it is common to have some bruising and discomfort for a couple of days.

Wearing a good supportive non-wired bra, such as a sports bra, for the first 48 hours after your biopsy may help reduce any discomfort. Ice can also be used to reduce the pain and swelling. You can use an ice pack or wrap some ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas in a damp tea towel and apply it to the area for up to 20 minutes. Always check your skin afterwards as ice can burn and cause blisters. For this reason, you should never place plastic bags of ice or frozen vegetables directly onto your skin.

The dressing you have over your biopsy site will help to prevent bleeding and subsequent bruising.

Occasionally, because a biopsy sample has been obtained, skin indentation/dimpling can occur at the site of the biopsy. Very occasionally the skin may tear, and it may be necessary to place stitches at the biopsy site.

The dressing can be removed 48 hours after your biopsy, paper stitches should stay on for three days, after which they can be soaked off in the bath or shower.

Pain

The anaesthetic will wear off after two to three hours. If you then find your breast uncomfortable or painful, take mild pain relief such as paracetamol, following the instructions on the pack. Avoid taking aspirin as this may cause extra bruising in the breast.

Pain and discomfort usually subsides within a day or two. If you are experiencing pain for longer than this or are concerned then please contact a breast care nurse on the number at the end of the leaflet.

Is there anything I need to look out for?

If you notice that the wound is bleeding, or the bruise is visibly growing, press hard on the area for 10 minutes. If this doesn't stop the bleeding or if the bruise continues to get bigger, contact the breast care nurse team, NHS 111 or your nearest A&E department. If you take blood-thinning medications (such as warfarin), please contact your anticoagulant clinic for advice. If you experience chest pain or shortness of breath, contact NHS 111 or nearest A&E department as soon as possible.

When can I get back to normal?

You should 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 then you can return to your usual day-to-day activities. If your work is physical, we advise that you carry out light duties the following day.

When will I get the results?

You may be required to visit the hospital for your results. It can take 2 – 3 weeks after the biopsy to obtain these results and at times could possibly take longer, as the tissue sample requires careful preparation before it can be examined under the microscope and all biopsy results are discussed at the weekly breast multidisciplinary team meeting.

If you do not receive a letter for an appointment within 3 weeks after your biopsy, please contact the Macmillan breast clinical nurse specialist using the telephone number below.

Sources of information

If you have questions following your biopsy you can contact the Macmillan breast clinical nurse specialist on: 0300 131 4604. This phone is manned Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. For out of hours please leave a message on the answerphone.

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.

Hand hygiene

We are 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.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Dr Ulle Raudsepp, Radiologist, Radiology, Dr Yesim Akan, Radiologist, Radiology

Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet: Core Services

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Responsible clinician/author:	Lauren Head, Lead Interventional Mammographer / Deputy Modality Manager.