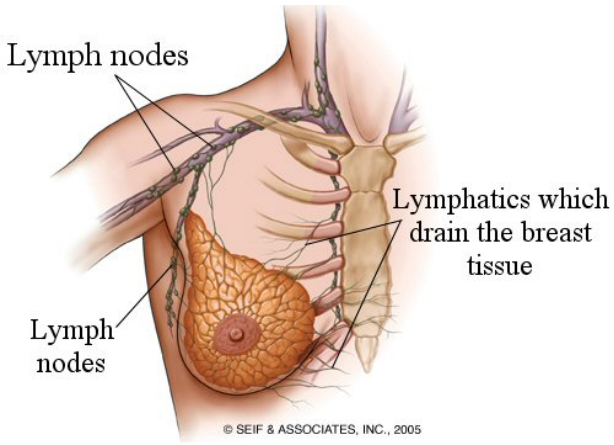
# Breast Biopsy Procedure

## WHY YOU NEED A BIOPSY




Your caregiver has recommended that you have a breast tissue sample taken (*biopsy*). This is done to be certain that the lump or abnormality found in your breast is not cancerous (*malignant*). During a biopsy, a small piece of tissue is removed, so it can be examined under a microscope by a specialist (*pathologist*) who looks at tissues and cells and diagnoses abnormalities in them. Most lumps (*tumors*) or abnormalities, on or in the breast, are not cancerous (*benign*). However, biopsies are taken when your caregiver cannot be absolutely certain of what is wrong only from doing a physical exam, mammogram (*breast X-ray*), or other studies. A breast biopsy can tell you whether nothing more needs to be done, or you need more surgery or another type of treatment.

A biopsy is done when there is:

- Any undiagnosed breast mass.
- Nipple abnormalities, dimpling, crusting, ulcerations.
- Calcium deposits (*calcifications*) or abnormalities seen on your mammogram, ultrasound, or MRI.
- Suspicious changes in the breast (thickening, asymmetry) seen on mammogram.
- Abnormal discharge from the nipple, especially blood.
- Redness, swelling, and pain of the breast.

## HOW A BIOPSY IS PERFORMED

A biopsy is often performed on an outpatient basis (*you go home the same day*). This can be done in a hospital, clinic, or surgical center. Tissue samples (*biopsies*) are often done under local anesthesia (*area is numbed*). Sometimes general anesthetics are required, in which case you sleep through the procedure. Biopsies may remove the entire lump, a small piece of the lump**,** or a small sliver of tissue removed by needle.

## TYPES OF BREAST BIOPSY

- **Fine needle aspiration.** A thin needle is placed through the skin, to the lump or cyst, and cells are removed.
- **Core needle biopsy.** A large needle with a special tip is placed through the skin, to the abnormality, and a piece of tissue is removed.
- **Stereotactic biopsy.** A core needle with a special X-ray is used, to direct the needle to the lump or abnormal area, which is difficult to feel or cannot be felt.
- **Vacuum-assisted biopsy.** A hollow probe and a gentle vacuum remove a sample of tissue.
- **Ultrasound guided core needle biopsy.** You lie on your stomach, with your breast through an opening, and a high frequency ultrasound helps guide the needle to the area of the abnormality.
- **Open biopsy.** An incision is made in the breast, and a piece of the lump or the whole lump is removed.

## BEFORE SURGERY

- You should arrive 1 hour prior to your procedure, unless otherwise directed by your caregiver.
- Check-in at the admissions desk, to fill out necessary forms, if you are not preregistered.
- There will be consent forms to sign, prior to the procedure.
- There is a waiting area for your family, while you are having your biopsy.
- Try to have someone with you, to drive you home.
- Do not smoke for 2 weeks before the surgery.
- Let your caregiver know if you develop a cold or an infection.
- Do not drink alcohol for at least 24 hours before surgery.

- Wear a good support bra to the surgery.

## LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Allergies.
- Medicines taken, including herbs, eye drops, over-the-counter medicines, and creams.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Previous problems with anesthetics or Novocaine.
- If you are taking aspirin or blood thinners.
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Previous surgery.
- Other health problems.

## RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

- Bleeding.
- Infection.
- Allergy to medicines.
- Bruising and swelling of the breast.
- Alteration in the shape of the breast.
- Not finding the lump or abnormality.
- Needing more surgery.

## AFTER YOUR SURGERY

- After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area, where a nurse will watch and check your progress. Once you are awake, stable, and taking fluids well, if there are no other problems, you will be allowed to go home.
- Ice packs applied to your operative site may help with discomfort and keep the swelling down.
- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed. Avoid strenuous activities affecting the arm on the side of the biopsy, such as tennis, swimming, heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) or pulling.
- Bruising in the breast is normal following this procedure.
- Wearing a support bra, even to bed, may be more comfortable. The bra will also help keep the dressing on.
- Change dressings as directed.
- Your doctor may apply a pressure dressing on your breast for 24 to 48 hours.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Do not take aspirin, because it can cause bleeding.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- You may resume your usual diet.
- Have someone drive you home after the surgery.
- Do not do any exercise, driving, lifting or general activities without your caregiver's permission.
- Take medicines and over-the-counter medicines, as ordered by your caregiver.
- Keep your postoperative appointments as recommended.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking pain medicine.

## FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF YOUR TEST

Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You notice redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound.
- You notice a bad smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- You develop a rash.
- You need stronger pain medicine.

- You are having an allergic reaction or problems with your medicines.

**SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:**

- You have difficulty breathing.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- There is increased bleeding (more than a small spot) from the wound.
- Pus is coming from the wound.
- The wound is breaking open.

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