Thyroid Biopsy

The thyroid gland is a butterfly-shaped gland, which is situated in front of the neck. It produces certain chemical substances (*hormones*) that decide how fast your body burns energy. Removing thyroid tissue for testing (*thyroid biopsy*) is performed to detect thyroid disease. A small sample of tissue is taken from the thyroid gland and it is examined under a microscope. This helps in detecting infection, cancer, or other problems of the thyroid. This test is done to find out the causes of thyroid problems, such as if you have a lump in the gland or swelling (*goiter*). There are two ways for taking the sample tissue. In fine needle biopsy, the sample is removed using a thin needle. In open biopsy, sample tissue is taken after making a cut in the skin.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

Your caregiver will order blood tests to look for any bleeding problems. You will be asked to sign a consent form. This form states that you agree to do the procedure. Before doing a needle-type biopsy, your caregiver may give you a medicine to help you to relax. You will be awake during the procedure.

Before doing an open biopsy, you should not eat or drink anything for 10 hours prior to the test. Your caregiver may give you a medicine to help you to relax. An intravenous line will be placed in the vein of your arm. This is for giving medicines and fluid during the procedure. You will have to remove your dentures. You will also have to remove all jewels and metal objects you may be wearing around your neck or upper body. You will then be given general anesthesia. You will be asleep during the procedure.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT:

- Allergy to any medicine.
- Having any bleeding problem.
- The names and doses of any medicine that you are taking (including herbal medicines or over the counter medicines).
- Your pregnancy and if you are breastfeeding.
- Any test using iodine dye you have undergone 4 weeks prior to the biopsy.

RISKS & COMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE

The area will be made numb prior to insertion of the needle for the biopsy. There is minimal pain with this procedure and the patient will be free to go shortly after it is finished, but must stay for a few hours post-operatively to recover from the general anesthesia. You may have bleeding from the site. The risk of bleeding is higher if you have a bleeding disorder or are taking any blood thinning medicines. If the bleeding is severe, it can press on the wind pipe and cause discomfort. There is also a risk of infection.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

The obtained tissue taken during surgery will be sent to pathology and you will have results in approximately 1 week. After the procedure, you will have pain at the site. The caregiver will give you medicines to reduce the pain. You may have hoarse voice or sore throat. Sucking on throat lozenges and gargling with warm salt water will help to soothe your throat.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep your head raised on a pillow when you are lying down.
- When you sit up, support the back of your head and neck with your hands.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have lot of bleeding through the bandage. **This is an emergency.** Go directly to an ED to be evaluated. This may necessitate a further procedure to stop the bleeding.
- You have difficulty in swallowing.

- You have fever.
- You have severe pain or swelling at the test site.
- You notice pus coming from the test site.
- You have swollen glands (*lymph nodes*).

REFERENCES

Medline Plus
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003899.htm

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