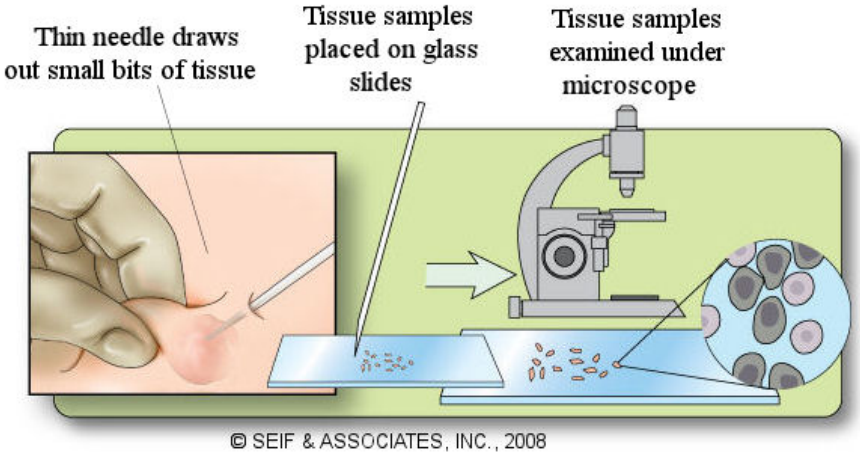
Fine Needle Aspiration

Fine needle aspiration is a procedure used to remove a piece of tissue. The tissue may be removed from a swelling or abnormal growth (*tumor*). It is also used to confirm a cyst.
A cyst is a fluid filled sac. The procedure may be done by your caregiver or a specialist.



BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- No special preparation is needed in most cases. Your caregiver will let you know if there are special requirements, such as an empty stomach.
- Be sure to ask your caregiver any questions before the procedure starts.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT:

- Any medications you take, especially blood thinners like aspirin.
- Any problems you may have had with similar procedures in the past.

PROCEDURE

- This procedure is done under local or no anesthetic.
- The skin is cleaned carefully.
- A thin needle is directed into a lump. The needle is directed in several different directions into the lump while suction is applied to the needle. When samples are removed, the needle is withdrawn.
- The contents obtained are placed on a slide. They are then fixed, stained and examined under the microscope. The slide is examined by a specialist in the examination of tissue (*pathologist*).
- A diagnosis can then be made. The pathologist will decide if the specimen is cancerous (*malignant*) or not cancerous (*benign*). If fluid is taken from a cyst, cells from the fluid can be examined. If no material is obtained from a fine needle aspiration, the sample may not rule out a problem. Sometimes the procedure is done again. The pathologist may need several days before a result is available.

RISKS & COMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE

This is a safe procedure. There is a very small risk of infection and or bleeding. Other complications can occur if the aspiration site is deep in the body. Your caregiver or specialist will explain this to you.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- There are usually no limits on diet or activity after a fine needle aspiration.
- Your caregiver may give you instructions regarding the aspiration site. This will include information about keeping the site clean and dry. Follow these instructions carefully.
- Call for your test results as instructed by your caregiver. Remember, it is your responsibility to get the results of your testing. **Do not** think everything is fine if you have not heard from your caregiver.
- Keep a close watch on the aspiration site. Report any redness, swelling or drainage.
- You should not have much pain at the aspiration site.
- Take any medications as told by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have pain or drainage at the aspiration site that does not go away.
- Swelling at the aspiration site does not gradually go away.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a fever a day or two after the aspiration.
- You develop severe pain at the aspiration site.
- You develop a warm, tender swelling at the aspiration site.

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