

Breast Biopsy Methods

Your doctor has decided that an area in your breast needs to be examined in more detail. Several tools may be used to find out more information.

- A breast exam will be done prior to the procedure.
- Imaging studies (mammogram, ultrasound, or MRI) may be done. A radiologist is a doctor who will read the imaging studies.
- Removal of tissue in the breast (biopsy) may be done. A pathologist is a doctor who will look at the tissue under a microscope.

How will the doctor decide which way to remove tissue from my breast?

The choice of which type of biopsy method used depends on:

- If the area on your breast can be felt.
- If the area can only be seen on the imaging studies.
- The best type of imaging to find the area to be biopsied.

What members of the health care team will help with the biopsy?

- A doctor will do the biopsy.
- Staff who may help with the biopsy can include: a nurse, a technologist or a medical assistant.
- A pathologist will examine the tissue from the biopsy under the microscope.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

What are the different types of biopsy methods?

Your nurse will check the box next to the biopsy method you will have:

- ☐ **Fine Needle Aspiration** uses a very thin needle and small syringe to remove either fluid or cells from a lump. If the lump is fluid filled (cystic) often the aspiration will make the lump disappear. If the breast lump is solid, removing some cells may aid the pathologist in identifying what the lump might be. If the lump is solid, additional testing may be needed.
- ☐ **Core Needle Biopsy** uses a special spring loaded needle to obtain small tube like (cylinder) cores of tissue. This may be done by the surgical oncologist or by the radiologist with the help of ultrasound or a mammogram. The skin near the area is numbed with medicine. The biopsy needle is then placed in the skin of the breast. Several small slivers of tissue are removed to examine under the microscope.
- ☐ **Stereotactic Biopsy** is used to sample an area that cannot be felt by the surgical oncologist. Lying face down on a special table, the area of concern in your breast is found using mammographic guidance. The skin near the area is numbed with medicine. The biopsy needle is then placed in the skin of the breast. Using computer guidance, another needle obtains small slivers of tissue for the pathologist to examine under the microscope.
- ☐ **Mammotome Biopsy** is used to sample an area that cannot be felt by the surgical oncologist. This device uses a larger needle to try to remove all of an area in your breast. This will be done by the surgical oncologist or by the radiologist with the help of ultrasound or mammogram. The skin near the area of concern is numbed with medicine. The biopsy needle is then placed in the skin of the breast. The mammotome is used to remove the area in small pieces for examination. Depending on the size of the area in your breast, it may be completely removed with this procedure.
- ☐ **Needle Localization Biopsy** is used when the area of concern in your breast is hard to feel. The skin near the area of concern is numbed with medicine. Using ultrasound or mammogram as a guide, the radiologist places a thin needle in the breast. The surgical oncologist will then remove tissue through a small incision in the breast. The pathologist will examine the tissue. Sometimes, this biopsy needs to be done with medicine that will make you feel sleepy (anesthesia).

- ❑ **Excisional Biopsy** is used to remove a small lump that can be felt by the surgical oncologist. The skin near the area of concern is numbed with medicine. The lump is removed through a small incision in the breast for examination. Sometimes, this biopsy needs to be done with medicine that will make you feel sleepy (anesthesia).
- ❑ **MRI Guided Biopsy** is a type of biopsy that uses computer technology to exam an abnormal area seen on a MRI scan. Lying face down, the breast hangs through an opening in this special table. MRI images will be taken to confirm the location of the abnormal area. Using computer imaging, the radiologist will locate the area of the breast tissue to be biopsied. The biopsy needle is then inserted and samples of breast tissue are taken. These tissue samples are then examined under the microscope.

How is the tissue from the biopsy examined?

The cells or tissue removed by the doctor are sent to the Pathology Department to be examined.

A final pathology report is a document that gives details about the cells and tissue that were removed. Final results are usually available 3 to 5 working days after the biopsy. Instructions will be given to you on how to obtain this information. The type of biopsy and your pathology report will be used to see if more tissue needs to be removed or if the area can be watched with ultrasound, mammogram, or examination.

How do I care for my breast after a biopsy?

You will be given detailed instructions on how to care for the area where the biopsy was done. Call your health care team if you have any questions or problems.