

## Patient information factsheet

### Vacuum core biopsy

Your mammogram has shown an abnormality or lump in your breast. A vacuum core biopsy is needed to take tissue from this area to find out what it is. It is a non-surgical procedure which takes place on an outpatient basis. It is a very accurate technique and should not cause you much discomfort. Please remember a large number of abnormalities turn out to be benign with no risk to your health.

An appointment has been made for you to attend on:

Date: ..... Time: .....

Location: .....

#### The procedure

The biopsy should take around one hour in total. However, it may occasionally take longer if the biopsy is technically difficult. Most of this time is used for preparation, positioning and aftercare. The actual taking of the tissue lasts only a few minutes. The biopsy is performed by a radiologist or specialist radiographer.

On arrival you will have the opportunity to ask questions if there is anything you are unsure about. In the examination room you will either sit or lie down and your breast will be compressed and an x-ray taken. This is much like a normal mammogram. Once the abnormality has been located, two further X-rays are taken from different angles. The computer will calculate the exact position for the biopsy needle.

It is essential you stay completely still and do not change your position during this part of the procedure.

Your skin will then be cleaned and some local anaesthetic will be injected into your breast to make the area go numb (this feels like a bee sting for a few seconds). Once the area is completely numb, a very small cut is made into the skin to allow the biopsy needle to pass through. Further x-rays may be taken as a final check on the biopsy needle position. The tissue samples are then obtained.

The biopsy device makes a variety of noises and you will feel some vibration. Most women do not find the procedure painful although there may be some discomfort for brief periods. We will be present throughout the procedure to ensure you remain comfortable.

Once we have taken the tissue samples we usually take another x-ray to check the right area has been included in the sample.

#### Marker clip

On some occasions we remove all or most of the area of concern. When this happens we insert a very small metal clip, which is the size of a pin head, into the biopsy site. This is so the area can be easily located again if necessary.

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The clip is made of titanium (the same metal used for artificial joints) and will cause no problems or side effects. It will not set off alarms at airports. If you do not need further treatment it can be left safely in your breast.

## After the procedure

When the biopsy is completed, and where necessary a clip inserted, we will remove the compression paddle and position you on your back.

Firm compression will be applied to the biopsy site for about five to ten minutes. This is to reduce bruising and ensure any bleeding has stopped. The wound will be closed using paper stitches and then covered with a waterproof dressing.

## After care

Once the local anaesthetic wears off the area might feel sore. We recommend you take a normal dose of a light painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen if you wish. Please check with your doctor or us if you are unsure about taking any medication.

If you take aspirin for any other condition continue to take your recommended dose. Do not take extra aspirin for pain relief as this will encourage bleeding and bruising.

We recommend you avoid strenuous exercise and heavy lifting for 24 to 48 hours after the procedure. It is a good idea to go home and rest for the remainder of the day.

When washing or showering ensure you keep the area as dry as possible. Do not soak the area in the bath for the first 48 hours.

## Results

The biopsy sample will be sent for analysis straight after the procedure. The results will be available within one week. We will book you a follow-up appointment so we can discuss your test results with you.

## Further information

For more information contact:

- Southampton and Salisbury breast screening unit, Princess Anne Hospital  
Telephone: 023 8120 4959 Email: bsuappts@uhs.nhs.uk
- Breast care nurses  
Telephone: 023 8120 3753

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