

Patient information factsheet

MRI-guided vacuum assisted biopsy (VAB) of the breast

We've written this factsheet to give you more information about having an MRI-guided vacuum assisted biopsy (VAB) of the breast. It includes the benefits, risks and alternatives to the procedure, and what you can expect at your appointment. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team who will be pleased to help you. You will also have the opportunity to discuss anything you are unsure about with us before your appointment.

What is an MRI-guided VAB of the breast?

It is a procedure where a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan is used to help locate an area of concern in the breast and a biopsy (tissue sample) is taken from the breast.

Why should I have this procedure?

Your recent MRI scan has shown an area in the breast that needs to be investigated by obtaining a small sample of tissue. This procedure will help to make a diagnosis.

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure will take place in an MRI scanner. You will be awake for the entire test, which normally lasts about 60 minutes. It will be performed by a specially trained radiologist.

We will ask you to undress to the waist and put on a hospital gown. A radiographer will position you in the MRI scanner lying face down with your arms above your head.

We will take MR images with intravenous (IV) dye to check that the correct area has been located. You may be given this dye twice.

We will give you a local anaesthetic injection to numb the specific part of the breast. This will feel like a bee sting for a few seconds. We will then make a small cut in your skin to allow passage of the biopsy needle. We will perform a brief scan to make sure the needle is in the correct position.

The biopsy device will make a variety of noises and you will feel some vibration. Most people do not find the procedure painful, but there may be times when you feel some discomfort. We will try and make you as comfortable as possible throughout the procedure.

Once all the samples have been taken, we will insert a tiny metal marker clip into your breast through the biopsy needle to mark the area where the samples were taken. This should be a painless procedure. The marker is harmless and will help us locate the area of concern in the future. We will finish the procedure by performing a brief scan to make sure the marker clip is in the correct position.

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What are the risks?

Complications from VAB are rare. However, as with any procedure there are some risks associated with it.

- **Internal bruising (haematoma) in the breast.** We try to minimise this by placing firm pressure on the breast immediately after the biopsy.
- **Bleeding from the wound site.** On rare occasions, the biopsy site may start to bleed after you leave hospital. We will give you instructions on what to do if this happens.
- **Infection of the wound site.** We will cover the wound with a sterile dressing after the procedure and we will advise how to look after the area.
- **Skin damage or scarring.** Depending on where the sample is taken from, there is a very small risk that skin on the opposite side of the breast may be damaged or scarred.
- **The area of abnormality is not identified or is in a part of the breast which proves difficult to get good tissue samples from.** If this is the case, we may abandon the procedure or we may get an inconclusive biopsy result. We will advise you about alternative tests.

Are there any alternative tests?

One alternative is a stereotactic VAB. This procedure is done using a mammogram (x-ray) machine, rather than an MRI scan. If the area is difficult to access during the MRI-guided VAB, we may insert a tiny metal marker clip in your breast, which should allow us to easily locate the area on the mammogram.

Another alternative is an excision biopsy. An excision biopsy is a minor operation usually done under general anaesthetic to remove the abnormal area of tissue (lump). The tissue will then be sent to be examined so that a diagnosis can be made. In some circumstances, we may advise that you have another MRI scan.

How can I prepare for an MRI-guided VAB?

Food and drink

You can eat and drink normally before and after the procedure.

Medicines

Please tell us about the medicines you are taking, in particular if you are taking any antiplatelet medicines (aspirin or clopidogrel) or anticoagulant medicines (warfarin or rivaroxaban). Please also let us know if you have ever experienced significant or uncontrolled bleeding.

Allergies

If you are allergic to any medicines, local anaesthetic or gadolinium (IV dye), please contact us as soon as possible after receiving your appointment letter.

Bringing someone with you

If possible, please bring a friend or relative to accompany you home.

Clothing

Some people find it more comfortable to wear a bra after the procedure. If you don't normally wear a bra, please bring a soft bra with you to wear after the procedure and for the first few days afterwards.

Work

Please arrange time off work on the day of your procedure, if possible. You should expect to be at Southampton General Hospital for two to three hours. You may also require additional time off after the procedure, depending on how you're feeling.

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Giving consent (permission)

Before we begin the procedure, a consultant breast radiologist will explain the procedure to you, check any relevant medical history and ask you to sign a consent form.

Will I feel any pain?

The local anaesthetic may cause a stinging sensation before it numbs the breast, but this should only last for a few seconds. You may feel some pressure on the breast during the procedure, but you should not feel any pain. If you do feel pain, please tell the radiologist or radiographer and we will give you more local anaesthetic.

What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the procedure, we will apply firm pressure to your breast for 20 minutes. This will help to minimise your risk of developing internal bruising in the breast (haematoma). We will place a paper stitch (steristrip) and a sterile waterproof dressing over the small cut in your skin and apply a pressure bandage.

Once you are dressed, we will ask you to stay in the MRI department for about 30 minutes to make sure that you feel comfortable enough to go home. We will also offer you a drink.

What do I need to do when I'm home?

Once home, you should rest as much as possible for the remaining part of the day. Please avoid any strenuous activities, such as heavy lifting, running or going to the gym for two days after your procedure. You will then be able to return to your usual activities. If your work is physical, we advise that you carry out light duties the following day.

The anaesthetic will wear off after two to three hours. If you then find your breast uncomfortable or painful, take mild pain relief such as paracetamol (following the instructions on the pack). Avoid taking aspirin as this may cause extra bruising in the breast. Pain and discomfort will usually subside within a day or two. If you are experiencing pain for longer than this or are concerned, please contact us.

You will need to remove the pressure dressing after four hours.

The dressings applied are waterproof so you may have a bath or shower, but try not to soak the area. The waterproof dressing and steristrips should remain on for five days. If the dressing falls off before five days, please replace with a waterproof plaster.

You will be left with a permanent tiny scar on the skin at the site of the biopsy.

On rare occasions, the biopsy site may start to bleed after you have gone home. If this happens, apply pressure to the breast over the biopsy site for 10 minutes. If the bleeding continues after this time, please continue to apply pressure to the area and contact us (between 9am and 4pm) or go to your local emergency department.

When will I receive my results?

We cannot give you the results immediately after the procedure, as we will need to send the tissue samples to the lab for analysis. This takes about two weeks. We will give you an appointment for the results after the procedure.

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Contact us

Breast care nurses

Telephone: **023 8120 3753** (9am to 4pm)

Useful links

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/breast-cancer/diagnosing/how-cancers-are-diagnosed/tests-and-scans

www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/breast-cancer/getting-diagnosed/tests-diagnose/vacuum-assisted-biopsy

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.