Assessment, diagnostic and screening services
Breast Screening Unit

Information for BLES breast biopsy

The breast clinic doctor has recommended that you undergo a Breast Lesion Excision System (BLES) breast biopsy to help you get an accurate diagnosis. This is a new procedure that has been reviewed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Gateshead breast unit is evaluating the procedure as an alternative to our current practice: vacuum assisted core biopsy.

This leaflet should help you to understand why this procedure is necessary and what is involved.

Why do I need a BLES breast biopsy?

Your doctor will have explained that your mammogram (breast x-ray) has revealed a change in your breast. A large percentage of these changes are benign, which means no cancer is detected, and there is no health risk to you. A BLES breast biopsy was developed as a simple procedure to obtain breast tissue samples for diagnosis.

The procedure is done under local anaesthetic, and there is no significant scarring to the breast. Alternative methods of collecting breast tissue samples would be:

- a diagnostic breast biopsy, which would be done under general anaesthetic
- a VACB procedure, which is done under local anaesthetic using a specialist x-ray examination table
- a simple fine needle test (FNA), but the results may prove inconclusive.

How is the BLES breast biopsy performed?

The BLES breast biopsy procedure will be performed by a specialist team. It may be done as part of your assessment visit or you may need to come back for another appointment. The procedure, its benefits and risks will be explained to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

It is a quick procedure and may be done under ultrasound or x-ray guidance. Your doctor will decide which method is most appropriate for you.

You will be asked to change into a gown and will be lying down for the procedure. The longest part of the procedure is the preparation, getting you into the correct position. The actual biopsy – taking the sample of tissue, takes less than 10 seconds.
The biopsy area will be numbed using local anaesthetic injected into your breast. You may feel a slight sting initially. If you feel any discomfort let your doctor know. A small cut will be made.

During the procedure you may feel pressure, tingling or a 'pinch' in your breast. There may also be an unusual smell during the biopsy, which is quite normal with this procedure.

You will hear various sounds in the room. The machine will beep and make sounds like a hairdryer when the tissue is being removed.

When the procedure is complete the nurse may apply pressure to the biopsy site to reduce bruising. A dressing will then be applied and you will be given instructions as to when this can be removed.

**Are there any risks associated with the procedure?**

The risks associated are bleeding and bruising. You may experience some slight swelling, bruising and discharge, which is normal. Any discomfort should disappear in one to two days. If it persists, please call your doctor.

**Will it hurt?**

The local anaesthetic may sting slightly as it is injected but the area quickly becomes numb.

**How long will the procedure take?**

The whole procedure usually takes 45 minutes to an hour. Most patients will be ready to go home about an hour to an hour and a half after their procedure.

**Will I be able to resume normal activities right away?**

After the nurse has applied a dressing to the biopsy site, you may get dressed. Most patients feel fine after the procedure and return to their normal routine straight away. However, we recommend that strenuous exercise or activity be avoided for 24 hours. If possible, go home, put your feet up and relax.

**What instructions should I follow after the biopsy?**

You may bathe or shower as normal and the dressing can be removed after 24 hours. Wearing a good supportive bra can help to ease any discomfort. You may wish to take a mild painkiller such as paracetamol, unless you have a known allergy. Please do not take any painkillers that contain aspirin on the day of your procedure.
When can I expect the results from my biopsy?

The tissue sample is sent to a pathologist who will look at it under a microscope. The pathologist will send a report to the doctor who referred you within five working days. You will be given an appointment to receive the results.

What if I have more questions?

It is very important that all your questions about the BLES breast biopsy procedure are answered and that you have all the information you need. We will be happy to answer any questions before the procedure or during it should the need arise.

If you have additional questions or concerns that are not addressed in this leaflet please do not hesitate to contact the breast care nurse on (0191) 445 2537, Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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Information Leaflet: 351
Version: 1
Title: Information for a BLES breast biopsy
First Published: July 2011
Review Date: July 2013
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