Breast Screening Directorate

Information for a Mammotome biopsy

The Breast Clinic Doctor has recommended that you undergo a mammotome breast biopsy.

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

Why do I need a mammotome biopsy?

Probably by now your doctor has explained to you that your mammogram (breast x-ray) has revealed an abnormality in your breast. A large percentage of these abnormalities are benign and present no health risk to the patient. Mammotome was developed as a simple way of obtaining breast tissue samples for diagnosis.

The procedure does not require a general anaesthetic and there is no significant scarring to the breast. As an alternative you could undergo a diagnostic biopsy, which does require a general anaesthetic and a hospital stay, or a simple fine needle aspiration (FNA) could be taken but the results may prove to be inconclusive. The benefit of the mammotome is that it is completed as an out patient procedure and is shown to be 98% accurate.

How is the mammotome biopsy performed?

The mammotome procedure will be performed by a specialist team. After reporting to Reception in the Breast unit, the procedure, the benefits and risk will be explained to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Then you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. You will be shown into the mammotome room where you will be asked to lie face down on the specialist mammotome examination table, making sure you are as comfortable as possible. Your breast will be positioned through a special round opening in the table. The table will then be raised so that the staff can work from below.

The first part of the mammotome procedure will seem much like having a mammogram, except that you are lying down instead of standing up. Your breast will then be compressed with a compression paddle, just as it was during your mammogram. An x-ray will be taken to ensure that the area of the breast which needs to be sampled is correctly positioned in the window. When the position is correct, two x-rays will be taken from different angles.
These are called stereo images and are used with the help of a computer to determine the exact position for the biopsy needle.

The biopsy area will then be numbed using local anaesthetic injected into your breast. You may feel a slight sting initially. When the area is numb a small incision will be made in the skin and the tissue samples will be taken. This procedure uses a vacuum system and the noise from this will be heard at this point. When sufficient samples have been obtained the biopsy needle will be removed, the compression paddle released and the nurse will apply pressure the biopsy site for 5-10 minutes to prevent/reduce bleeding. A dressing will then be applied and you will be given instructions as to when this is to be removed.

Sometimes a tiny metallic marker clip is left in place in the breast to mark the area that has been sampled. If this is required the person performing the test will explain this fully to you.

Are there any risks associated with the procedure?

The risks associated are bleeding and bruising.

Will it hurt?

Most patients find lying on the table quite comfortable and they only feel pressure in the biopsied area. The local anaesthetic may sting slightly as it is injected but the area quickly becomes numb.

How long will the examination take?

The whole procedure usually takes less than an hour. Most patients will be ready to go home about an hour to an hour and a half after their appointment time.

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

After the nurse has applied a dressing to the biopsy site, you may get dressed. Most women feel fine after the procedure and return to their normal routine right away. However, we recommend that strenuous exercise or activity be avoided for at least 24 hours. If possible, it is not a bad idea to go home after the procedure, put your feet up and simply relax.

What instructions should I follow after the biopsy?

You will receive a leaflet with instructions for your biopsy aftercare.

When can I expect the results of my biopsy?

The tissue samples are sent to a pathologist who will look at it under a microscope. The pathologist will examine the tissue and send a report to the referring doctor within 5 working days. You will be given an appointment to receive the results.
What if I have more questions?

Our staff feel it is very important that all of your questions about the MammoToMe 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 prior to your biopsy appointment on (0191) 445 2537.

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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This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request