

BIOPSIES AND FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATIONS



Preparation Information Sheet

BIOPSIES AND FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATIONS:

What is it:

Tissue sampling using a needle which is guided into an abnormality by ultrasound, CT or mammography. Ultrasound is used to guide biopsies of the breast, thyroid, liver and superficial lymph nodes and other accessible structures. CT is used to guide biopsies of the chest, abdomen and pelvis. Some breast biopsies are guided by mammography if the abnormality is not visible on ultrasound.

What you must tell us beforehand:

If you are on anticoagulants such as Warfarin.

Preparation:

For abdominal biopsies you may be asked to fast for 4 hours.

What happens:

You will change into a gown and be comfortably positioned so that the area being examined is most accessible. Scans are taken to locate its exact position. The skin in the area is sterilised with antiseptic, local anaesthetic given, then a needle is guided into the abnormality and a sample taken. This is repeated 2-4 times until sufficient material is obtained for pathology. More than one sample is needed to avoid sampling error and ensure there is adequate tissue for the pathologist.

How long does it take:

About 30 minutes.

Safety:

In general, these are very safe techniques and have a very low complication rate. They are the safest way of obtaining a biopsy in most cases.

Complications:

Lung biopsy:

Small air leaks are common from the puncture site and collect around the lung (pneumothorax). These resolve spontaneously over a few days. Rarely, air leakage will cause the lung to collapse and a chest drain may be inserted to drain out the air and allow the lung to re-expand.

Other biopsies:

Significant bleeding or infection can occur depending on the biopsy site but is rare.

After your examination:

There can be some discomfort at the biopsy site but it is usually minor and resolves in 3-4 hours. Ice packs for 10 minutes each hour and simple analgesics such as paracetamol can be used if needed.

Pathology fees:

You will be sent an account by the pathologist or sign an assignment form for the pathologist's fee for examining the specimen. The pathologist will send their report directly to your doctor within 2-3 days of the biopsy.

Getting your pathology report:

It is essential you see your doctor within a few days to get the biopsy result.