



GENERAL SURGERY  
PATIENT & FAMILY  
EDUCATION



# BREAST BIOPSY: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Don't lose sleep over breast lumps,  
let a biopsy ease your worries.

# WHAT IS A BREAST BIOPSY?

It can be worrisome to find a lump in your breast, and only natural to wonder if it might be cancer. **Although more than 90% of lumps are harmless, they should be examined to dismiss the possibility of cancer.**

A breast biopsy takes a tissue sample from the lump in your breast which is examined in the laboratory. This will tell your doctor if the lump is benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). It is usually done as a minimally invasive procedure that can be completed as day surgery, without the need for an overnight stay.

If cancerous cells are found, your doctor will advise you on what to do next.

## Why do you need a breast biopsy?

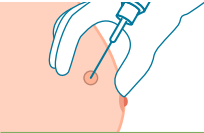

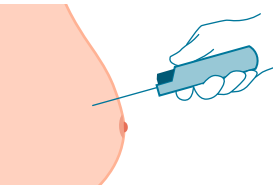

A breast biopsy may be advised if imaging tests such as an ultrasound or mammogram reveal a lump. It is the **most accurate way to determine if the lump is cancerous.**

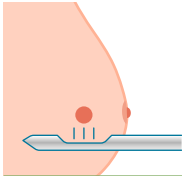

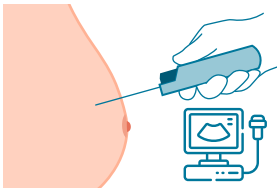

It is important to see a doctor for symptoms such as:

- ! Lump(s) in the breast
- ! Bloody discharge from the nipple
- ! Breast pain
- ! Change in nipple shape or colour
- ! Change in skin colour
- ! Dimpling or puckering of the skin

## Types of breast biopsy procedures

There are several breast biopsy procedures and your doctor will choose one that is most appropriate based on the size of the lump, its location and other characteristics.

	How it is done	What it is used for	Anaesthesia
<b>Fine-needle aspiration biopsy</b> 	Sample is extracted using a very thin needle attached to a syringe.	To examine lumps felt during a breast exam or detected during a breast ultrasound.	 Local anaesthetic
<b>Core needle biopsy</b> 	Small incision is made and sample is extracted using a spring-loaded needle. Extraction may be repeated several times through the incision.	To remove more tissue than a fine-needle biopsy, with greater accuracy.	 Local anaesthetic

	How it's done	What it's used for	Anaesthesia
<b>Vacuum assisted needle biopsy (VAB)</b> 	<p>Sample is extracted using a needle with a vacuum to 'pull' tissue into the device. More tissue can be extracted in a single insertion.</p>	<p>To extract larger tissue samples, or to completely remove small breast lumps and calcifications.</p>	 Local anaesthetic
<b>Surgical biopsy</b> 	<p>Lump is located using ultrasound and accessed through a larger incision. A metal marker may be left in the breast, should the lump need to be completely removed in the future.</p>	<p>To examine lumps that are not easily accessible using other methods.</p>	 General anaesthetic

## Preparing for a breast biopsy

A breast biopsy is a low-risk outpatient procedure. We answer 5 commonly asked questions:



### Does it hurt?

A breast biopsy is relatively painless. Slight discomfort may be felt when the local anesthesia is administered, but there should not be any pain during the biopsy.



30-45

### How long will it take?

The average breast biopsy takes around 30 minutes, but may take as long as 45 minutes, depending on the size and location of the lump.



### Are there any risks?

Any type of medical procedure carries a risk. As breast biopsies are mostly minimally invasive, the risk is low. Do inform your doctor of any fever, swelling, or pain after the procedure.



### How do I prepare for a breast biopsy?

Let your doctor know of any allergies, especially to anaesthetics. Inform him/her of any recent illnesses or medical conditions, and any supplements or medications you are currently taking, especially if you are on aspirin or blood-thinning medication.



### Will there be a scar?

There should be minimal to no scarring as most breast biopsies are minimally invasive. Surgical biopsies, though, may leave a larger scar.

# AFTER A BREAST BIOPSY



**The wound will be dressed.** The bandage may be removed in 24 hours while the clear plastic dressing should be left in place for 3 days. You may shower as usual after 24 hours.



**It is normal to feel bruised and sore.** Your doctor will prescribe pain medication to be taken, if needed. Any pain and discomfort should go away within a week. Avoid strenuous activity during this time.

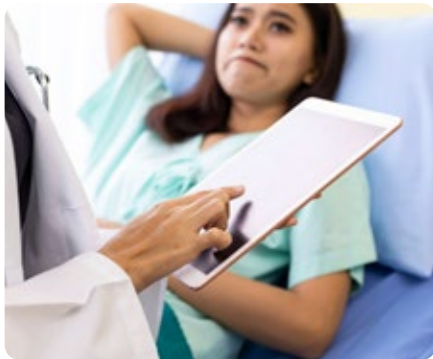


**Inform your doctor of side effects.** This includes fever, pain, swelling, or the presence of pus-filled blisters at the procedure site.



## Reviewing your breast biopsy results

The results from your breast biopsy will be ready in 2 to 3 days and you will need to see your doctor to discuss the findings.

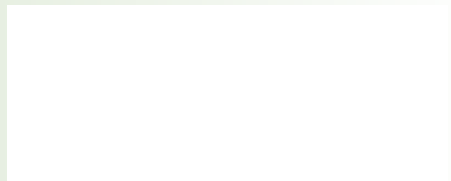


**Don't let the idea of a breast biopsy scare you. It is a minimally invasive procedure that is generally safe and well-tolerated.**

**A biopsy can put your mind at ease with the knowledge that your breast lump was harmless. Or, if cancerous cells are detected, treatment may begin early when it can be more effective.**

Speak to your doctor to understand your breast biopsy options and address your concerns.

For more information, speak to us at:



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