



Breast ultrasound with fine needle aspiration

Information for patients

Having a fine needle aspiration

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having a fine needle aspiration. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a radiographer in mammography.

If it is unacceptable to you for the test to be carried out by a male doctor please tell us before coming to the appointment.

What is a fine needle aspiration (FNA) of the breast?

This is a test that uses a fine needle to remove a small amount of fluid from a particular area of the breast. The positioning of the needle is guided by ultrasound imaging. The cores are sent to pathology and are examined by a pathologist to help with your diagnosis.

How does ultrasound work?

An ultrasound scan uses high frequency sound waves to produce images of the inside of the breast. The ultrasound waves are generated and detected through a small hand held probe that is held against the skin surface.

How should I prepare?

There are no special preparations for this procedure but we do advise that you wear clothing that can be easily removed as you will be asked to undress down to the waist. Please do not wear deodorant, powder or lotion on your breasts and under arm areas as some can affect the accuracy of the examination.

Please contact us if you have known problems with your blood clotting or if you take regular drugs to thin your blood, such as Warfarin, aspirin or Clopidogrel.

What does it involve?

You will be called you into the privacy of the ultrasound room by the imaging assistant where the radiologist or consultant radiographer will discuss your breast problems with you.

You will be asked to undress down to the waist and lie on the couch. The breast is then scanned using a small hand held probe held against the skin around the area of interest. The radiologist will then clean the skin of the area to be sampled. A local anaesthetic may then be used to numb the skin, this can sting.

Once the anaesthetic has worked, a fine needle is introduced into the area of concern. A syringe will be used to draw out some fluid, with the needle being gently moved up and down through the breast tissue. More than one sample may be taken.

At the end of the procedure the samples are sent to the pathology lab to be looked at using a microscope.

Once the radiologist has finished taking samples the area that has been sampled will be cleaned and a small plaster applied.

How long will it take?

Typically 15-30 minutes. Appointments are made using average times, but the time that an ultrasound scan takes depends on a number of things. This can cause delays to appointments, but it would be very rare to spend more than one hour in total in the imaging department.

After the examination

Once the examination is finished you are free to leave. There is usually some localised bruising and you may experience some discomfort. Driving should be no problem but the seat-belt may be uncomfortable

You can use paracetamol to relieve this but avoid aspirin or ibuprofen as these can slow blood clotting.

What are the risks?

There is a slight risk that you will experience bruising and /or bleeding and soreness at the site of the test. Very rarely an infection may occur at the site of the test.

There is also the chance that the tissue sample removed did not provide enough material for a diagnosis and the test may have to be repeated.

If you have any queries about the need for this test please contact your referring doctor.

Results

We will let you know the results within two weeks. If you do not hear, please contact the relevant secretary; see below for contact details.

If you have been recalled for additional imaging we will let you know the results within two weeks. If you do not hear, please contact the relevant secretary.

Gillian Dunstan
Crawley Hospital
01293 600 300 x3276

Amanda Bennett
East Surrey Hospital
01737 768 511 x1746

Further information

If you have any concerns about the examination please call us on 01737 231 604 (Monday to Friday 9:30am to 4pm) and ask to speak to a mammography radiographer.

Please note the hospital you need to attend

Crawley Hospital

The mammography department can be found in diagnostic imaging (x-ray) on the ground floor, behind the lifts of the main reception. Please report to x-ray reception.

East Surrey Hospital

The mammography department can be found in diagnostic imaging department (x-ray) at East Surrey Hospital and is on the ground floor of the hospital, closest to the Main Entrance. You can also get there by following the main hospital corridor from the East Entrance. Please report to the main diagnostic imaging reception.

Contact us

Diagnostic imaging

Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
East Surrey Hospital
Redhill Surrey RH1 5RH
Tel: 01737 231 604

www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 01737 231 958

Email: pals@sash.nhs.uk

Write to: PALS, East Surrey Hospital
Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH

You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats, including in larger text.
Contact 01737 231 958 for help.

Author: Senior mammographer

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Ultrasound with fine needle biopsy patient information