

Breast Care: Core Biopsy

Core biopsy involves taking a small sample of tissue from the breast to help doctors make a diagnosis. It is a relatively non-invasive procedure, compared with having an operation, and it does not require a general anaesthetic.

A doctor will do the biopsy, with a nurse present, either at Bassetlaw Hospital in the Diana, Princess of Wales Mammography Unit, or in the Jasmine Centre at Doncaster Royal Infirmary.

The procedure usually takes only a few minutes and may be quite uncomfortable. First of all, the doctor will freeze a small area of your breast with a local anaesthetic. This may sting at first, but then become numb. When the area is numb the doctor will make a tiny cut in the skin and put a needle into the breast tissue. A disposable core biopsy instrument is used, which makes a clicking noise when it takes the tissue sample. The doctor usually needs to take two or three samples before the test is finished.

When the test is completed, the clinic nurse or breast care nurse will put a small dressing over the incision (cut). When the local anaesthetic wears off you may experience slight to moderate discomfort with bruising at the needle site. This varies from person to person, but it should not cause pain that would prevent you from maintaining your daily activities. We recommend that if you experience discomfort you should take simple painkillers, such as paracetamol.

The tissue that has been removed will be stored in a special pot and taken to the laboratory. The pathologist will prepare the tissue and look at it under the microscope in order to detect any abnormality. A report will be sent to your consultant.



The results of the test are not available on the same day. Before you leave the breast care unit, you will be given a further appointment to attend a clinic for the results.

Although the doctors are expert in this technique, occasionally the results are not conclusive and the test may need to be repeated, or a different test may be recommended, such as excision biopsy.

Sometimes a core biopsy is done under X-ray control. You are seated and positioned at the X-ray machine to make sure that the biopsy is taken of precisely the right area.

Ultrasound is often used to assist core biopsy. Ultrasound guidance helps to accurately locate a specific area for sampling.

When there has been a break to the skin surface there is always a risk of infection. This would cause a red, inflamed appearance to the area, which would also feel hot to the touch; it may also weep slightly.

If this occurs, or you have any other worries or concerns, please contact the Sister at the hospital where your procedure was carried out, either Bassetlaw, telephone Worksop (01909) 500990, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday only, 9.00am to 4.00pm or Doncaster Royal Infirmary, telephone Doncaster (01302) 642397, Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 4.00pm. Friday 9.00am to 2.00pm.

If any problems occur outside these hours please contact your general practitioner, explaining that you have recently undergone a biopsy procedure.

Patient Experience Team

The team are available to help with any concerns/complaints you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 553140 or 0800 028 8059

Email: pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk.

