Understanding Breast Biopsy

What is a Breast Biopsy?

A breast biopsy is a procedure to remove a small sample of breast tissue for laboratory testing. Breast biopsy is considered the best way to evaluate a suspicious area in your breast to determine if it is breast cancer. There are several types of breast biopsy procedures.

A breast biopsy provides a sample of tissue that doctors use to diagnose and identify abnormalities in the cells that make up breast lumps or other unusual breast changes. And, a breast biopsy can help determine whether or not you need additional surgery or other treatment.

You are given a local anesthetic through a needle to numb the area of your breast to be biopsied. Most biopsy procedures take less than ½ an hour.

Your Doctor May Recommend a Breast Biopsy If:

- You or your doctor feels a lump or thickening in your breast, and your doctor suspects breast cancer.
- Your mammogram shows a suspicious area in your breast falling into categories of the BIRADS reporting system of 4 (suspicious) or 5 (highly suspicious).
- An ultrasound scan reveals a suspicious finding.
- You have unusual nipple changes, including crusting, scaling, dimpling skin or bloody discharge.

Types of Breast Biopsies

**Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy**

This is the simplest type of breast biopsy and may be used to evaluate a lump that can be felt during a clinical breast exam. Fine-needle aspiration is a quick method to distinguish between a fluid-filled cyst and a solid mass.

**Stereotactic Biopsy**

This is used to target calcifications, or masses, seen only on a mammogram. You will lie face down on a special table with an area for your breast. The breast is then compressed like a mammogram, and a sequence of images are obtained to localize the finding. Local anesthetic is then injected into your skin and breast, and additional images are obtained to guide the biopsy. The procedure usually takes 45 minutes.
Ultrasound Core Needle Biopsy

This is used to target masses, cysts, or abnormal appearing axillary lymph nodes seen on ultrasound. You will lie on your back on a table, like you did for the diagnostic ultrasound exam. The radiologist will then inject local anesthetic into your skin and breast and use the ultrasound images to guide the biopsy or cyst aspiration. The procedure usually takes 15 to 30 minutes.

MRI-Guided Core Needle Biopsy

This is used to target masses seen only on a MR. You will lie on a table face down, like you did for the diagnostic breast MR scan. A shorter version of the MR scan will be performed while contrast is infused through an I.V. in your arm. The radiologist will then inject local anesthetic into your skin and breast, and MR images will be repeated to guide the biopsy. The procedure usually takes 45 to 60 minutes.

What is a Breast Needle Localization?

This procedure is done prior to breast surgery. This diagnostic procedure allows the radiologist to identify the abnormal tissues for the surgeon prior to surgery. Needle localizations can be performed under mammography, ultrasound or MRI guidance. Initial image will be taken to identify the area. The breast will be cleansed and anesthetized to minimize pain. The radiologist will guide a small needle and wire to the abnormal area, images will be taken to confirm accurate placement. The wire will be securely taped to the breast. The radiologist will review the final images and send them with you to the surgery center.

Breast Biopsy Marker

A breast marker is often used following a biopsy procedure to mark the area for any possible future procedures. A very small surgical marker is left in the area that has just been sampled. The marker is safe and can be seen on future x-rays. A mammogram may be done following this procedure.
How to Prepare For Your Breast Biopsy

- Give an accurate health history to your healthcare team so they are able to communicate with the Breast Imaging Radiologist any health concerns.
- Inform us of all the medications you are taking.
- You must discontinue all aspirin, or aspirin containing products for five to seven days prior to your biopsy, regardless of the type. This includes ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, etc.), aspirin (Baby aspirin, BC Powder, Bayer, etc.), Naprosyn (Aleve, Naproxin, etc.).
- All blood thinners such as Coumadin, Heparin, and Plavix must be discontinued for at least 3-5 days. We will need to contact your physician to get the ok to stop these medications. You may need a blood test the morning of your procedure.
- If you have any questions about medications, please call the Breast Imaging Center or your healthcare provider.
- On the day of your biopsy, please wear your most supportive bra and a comfortable two piece clothing outfit. (You will be asked to undress from the waist up and put on a gown for the procedure.) Sports bras are best, but it is not necessary to purchase a bra for after your biopsy; if extra support is needed we may wrap your breast with an ace bandage.
- Post biopsy Instructions will be given and explained to you at the end of your procedure.

Before Your Breast Biopsy, Let the Breast Center Staff Know If You:

- Have allergies
- Have allergies to Latex, Tape or Iodine
- Have taken aspirin in the last seven days
- Are taking blood-thinning medications (anticoagulants)
- Are unable to lie on your stomach for an extended period of time
- Have a history of Arrhythmias like Atrial Fibrillation, Tachycardia

If your biopsy will be done using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), tell breast center staff if you have a cardiac pacemaker or other electronic device implanted in your body, or if you’re pregnant or think you may be pregnant. MRI generally isn’t recommended under these circumstances.

On The Day of Your Biopsy

- Please eat a light meal before your procedure.
- Wear a bra to your appointment. Your health care team may place a cold pack against the biopsy site after the procedure, and the bra can hold the cold pack in place and provide support for your breast.
- Please plan to be here for approximately 2 hours.

Needle Localization Patients Only

- Wear a loose fitting top, once the needle is placed you will not wear your bra.
- Once a post Needle Localization a Mammogram will be done.
- Once cleared by the radiologist that the needle is in place you will be taken to the hospital via ambulette service. A family member may accompany you to the hospital.