

BREAST BIOPSY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is a biopsy?

Biopsy is the removal of cells, tissue, or fluid for examination. These procedures are generally very simple and can prevent extensive surgical removal.

What is the difference between an aspiration and a biopsy?

Aspiration is the removal of something by suction. Biopsy is the removal and examination of tissue, cells, or fluids. FNA is a type of biopsy that removes cells through suction using a syringe.

What is the difference between core needle and fine needle aspiration?

There are a few differences between the two. A core needle biopsy is done with a larger needle and a small incision is made in the skin above the area to be biopsied. The incision allows for easier insertion of the needle, but is not needed when performing an FNA because the needle used is very thin. Refer to this table comparing fine needle aspiration and core needle biopsy for more detailed information.

FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATION

What information is obtained from a fine needle aspiration?

The sample obtained from a fine needle aspiration is sent to a pathologist where it will be examined. The pathologist will determine if the lesion is cancerous or not. Other information also may be obtained from the sample, such as the characteristics of the lesion.

What do I have to do to prepare for a fine needle aspiration?

There is no special preparation the day of the exam. However you should tell your doctor about any medications you are on. Some medications will cause excessive bleeding and should be stopped days before the procedure. It is a good idea to wear a two piece outfit, because you will need to change into a gown.

How is a fine needle aspiration performed?

Fine needle aspiration is a fairly simple procedure usually performed in a doctor's office with no anesthetic. FNA is performed using a small, 20-27 gauge, needle (larger gauge corresponds to a smaller needle). The person performing the exam will first clean the skin above the area to be sampled to prevent infection. Then the needle is inserted into the center of the lesion and small sample of cells is removed. Because the sample taken is very small this procedure will be repeated 4 or more times to ensure an adequate sample is obtained. In some cases ultrasound will be used to accurately guide the needle into the lesion.

Why do I need a fine needle aspiration?

A fine needle aspiration is done after a suspicious lesion is detected, either by an imaging technique or clinical finding. This procedure will remove a sample of cells that will be sent to a pathologist to determine whether the lesion is cancerous or benign.

Will the procedure hurt?

People interpret pain differently, but the FNA procedure is done using a very thin needle that should cause little or no discomfort. If you are nervous about the procedure speak to your healthcare provider and they should be able to accommodate you. After the procedure the area may be a little sore and bruised, but there are no other serious side effects.

What kind of anesthesia will be used?

In most cases no anesthesia is used when performing an FNA because the needle used is very thin. You can ask for a local anesthetic, but receiving the anesthetic may actually sting more than the FNA procedure.

How accurate is fine needle aspiration?

The accuracy of FNA depends on the experience of the practitioner. Don't be afraid to ask about the experience of the person doing the biopsy or the pathologist examining the sample.

CORE NEEDLE BIOPSY**Why do I need a core needle biopsy?**

A core needle biopsy is done after a suspicious lesion is detected, either by an imaging technique or clinical finding. This procedure will remove a sample of cells that will be sent to a pathologist to determine whether the lesion is cancerous or benign.

What do I have to do to prepare for a core needle biopsy?

There is no special preparation the day of the exam. However you should tell your doctor about any medications you are on. Some medications will cause excessive bleeding and should be stopped days before the procedure. It is a good idea to wear a two piece outfit, because you will need to change into a gown. If you are to receive a sedative, you should arrange for a ride home after the procedure.

How is a core needle biopsy performed?

Core needle biopsy is a simple procedure usually performed in a doctor's office with a local anesthetic. CNB is performed using an 11-18 gauge needle (larger than the one used in FNA). The person performing the exam will first clean the skin above the area to be sampled to prevent infection. A small nick will be made in the skin and the needle is inserted through this nick into the center of the lesion. When the lesion is reached a sample of tissue is removed. Steri-Strips™ are used to close the small cut and a larger bandage is placed to protect the wound. In some cases ultrasound will be used to accurately guide the needle into the lesion.

Will an anesthetic be used?

In most cases a local anesthetic is used. This numbs the area to be biopsied preventing any feelings of pain and is administered with a very small needle, which usually only causes a slight sting. If you are nervous or anxious about the procedure, speak with your healthcare provider.

Will the procedure hurt?

People interpret pain differently, but the core biopsy procedure is done with local anesthetic. Other than the sting from the anesthesia injection, you should not feel any pain. If you do experience significant pain, be sure to tell someone. After the procedure the area may be a little sore and bruised, but there are no other serious side effects. If you are nervous about the procedure speak to your healthcare provider and they should be able to accommodate you.

What information is obtained from a core needle biopsy?

The sample obtained from a core needle biopsy is sent to a pathologist where it will be examined. The pathologist will determine if the lesion is cancerous or not. Other information also may be obtained from the sample, such as the characteristics of the lesion.

