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Breast Biopsy

What does it mean when your doctor recommends a breast biopsy? A small piece of breast tissue is taken out. The breast tissue is sent to a pathologist, a doctor who looks at the tissue under a microscope to see if there are cancer cells. A radiologist or surgeon may do the biopsy.

There are three ways of doing a breast biopsy, excisional, stereotactic and ultrasound guided core. The advantages and disadvantages will be explained and your primary doctor, a radiologist or surgeon will help you choose which is best for you.

Stereotactic Breast Biopsy

The stereotactic needle biopsy procedure uses a computer to look at information from mammograms taken at two angles. The computer finds the right angle and depth needed to place the needle tip into the abnormal area. This procedure is done at the Breast Center. You should plan about 2 ½ to 3 hours time for the entire procedure, including the actual biopsy and recovery time.

Before the procedure begins, you will be asked to undress and change into a robe. The actual procedure will last about 1 to 1 ½ hours. The technologist will place you on your stomach on a special x-ray table. Your breast will be put through an opening in the table. Once you are in position your breast will be held in place with compression. An x-ray will be taken. You may need to be repositioned until your breast is in the desired position. A computer is used to find the abnormal area.

Next the radiologist will clean the area. This area will be numbed with local anesthesia. You will feel a prick and a small amount of burning due to the numbing medicine. Once the area is numb, a small slit (no more than ¼ of an inch) will be made in the skin through which a biopsy needle will be inserted. You may feel some slight pressure at this time. The needle is then guided to the biopsy area. Several small samples of breast tissue will be removed.

After the needle is removed, pressure and ice will be applied to the biopsy site. Steri-strips and a dressing will also be applied to the biopsy site.

Advantages:

- Not having to be put to sleep
- Only removing a small amount of breast tissue / no stitches
- Requires less time than a surgical biopsy
- Quick return to normal activities
- If cancer is diagnosed, a one step surgery can be performed to remove the abnormal area and check the lymph nodes in your axilla (under the arm)

Disadvantages:

- Possibility of not removing the desired tissue

Before the procedure:

Follow these and any other instructions your doctor gives you:

- Aspirin and medications containing aspirin should be stopped 7 days before the procedure.
- Aspirin like products (Motrin, Advil, Aleve, and Ibuprofen) should be stopped 48 hours before the procedure. If you have specific questions about your medication, please ask your doctor.
- On the day of the procedure take all of your other routine medications, especially blood pressure medication, as you normally would.
- You should eat and drink as usual the day of your procedure.
- Bathe the morning of the procedure. Do not apply perfume, powder or deodorant.
- Wear a good support bra. A sports bra is preferred for better support.
- Wear loose fitting clothes and a top that is easily removed.
- It is preferred that you bring someone to drive you home.



After the procedure:

The stereotactic breast biopsy is a safe and easy procedure. It does have some risks, though they are rare. These include bleeding and infection. Bruising is common.