



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Ultrasound-guided biopsy

Information for patients



What is an ultrasound-guided biopsy?

A biopsy is a procedure to take a small sample of tissue from a certain place in your body. A very thin biopsy needle is inserted through your skin to the area where the sample needs to be collected.

The ultrasound scanner is a non-invasive method of producing detailed images of the body. It uses high frequency sound waves which reflect back off your internal organs to make an image on the screen. This image is then used to guide the needle to the right place. The picture can provide accurate information about the size, structure and movement of many parts of the body. A small piece of tissue is then collected. This sample or 'biopsy' is sent to the laboratory to be analysed.

What are the benefits?

Other tests that you have had, such as blood tests, ultrasound scans, or CT scans have shown an abnormality. The doctors looking after you have decided that you should have a biopsy to help them find out what the abnormality might be and why it is there. They will then be able to decide on the most suitable treatment for you. Obtaining a biopsy sample enables several small specimens of tissue to be assessed in the laboratory. This additional information can be combined with the clinical and ultrasound features to make an accurate diagnosis.

What are the risks?

Ultrasound-guided biopsy is generally considered a safe procedure and there are no known side-effects from diagnostic ultrasound scanning. There is a small risk of bleeding where the needle has been inserted and you may experience some minor bruising. Other small risks vary according to which part of the body is being biopsied.

The doctor performing the biopsy will discuss the specific risks with you before asking your permission to perform the biopsy.

What should I do to prepare for the procedure?

Please do not eat for 6 hours before your procedure. You may drink water up to 2 hours before your appointment. Unless we have told you otherwise, continue to take your regular medication as usual, with a small amount of water.

Can I bring a relative or friend?

Yes, but they will usually be asked to wait outside the ultrasound room during the actual procedure.

What does the procedure involve?

When your biopsy is due to start, a member of staff will show you into the ultrasound room where you will meet the doctor.

The doctor will explain the biopsy procedure, how the biopsy will be performed and the risks involved. The doctor will then ask you to sign the consent form to give your permission for the biopsy to go ahead.

The doctor may also ask if you will allow the biopsy sample to be stored so that it may be used for research. This may benefit other patients in the future; the biopsy will be performed in the same way whether you answer yes or no. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask the doctor.

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and lie on the ultrasound bed. The doctor will spread some gel on your skin and use the ultrasound probe to decide the best position from which to take the tissue sample.

The doctor will clean your skin and use a small needle to inject local anaesthetic to numb the area. This will cause some stinging at first but should not be too uncomfortable.

The biopsy needle will be inserted through your skin into the abnormal area and a sample will be collected.

During the biopsy procedure the doctor may ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds. If you find this difficult, just do the best you can.

Two or three tissue samples may be taken whilst the needle is inserted, to give the doctors looking at the specimen as much information as possible.

The ultrasound and biopsy will generally take approximately 30 minutes, however it does vary and you may be in the Radiology Department for around one hour or more, and you may need to wait both before and after the examination.

Does it hurt?

You will only feel a minor scratch or discomfort during the biopsy, usually when the local anaesthetic is injected.

What happens after the procedure?

After the biopsy you will be taken on your bed to a ward or observation area. You may be asked to rest in bed for up to 4 hours.

Your appointment letter will tell you whether the biopsy will be performed as a day case (where you go home the same day) or whether you will need to stay in hospital overnight.

The nursing staff looking after you on the ward will regularly check your pulse and blood pressure and make sure you feel fine. Please ask for painkillers if you notice any pain after the biopsy.

What happens when I go home?

When you go home you can eat and drink normally. We will give you an information sheet to take home with you.

Can I drive home?

Having a biopsy is safe and complications are extremely rare, but we advise that you do not drive home after an ultrasound guided biopsy. You should arrange alternative transport.

Will the biopsy give the answer?

Unfortunately, a small number of biopsies don't give us a diagnosis after they have been analysed in the laboratory.

The results of your biopsy will be available about a week later and your doctor will see you in clinic with the results.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Radiology Department using the number on your appointment letter.

Further information

More information is available on the following websites:

www.impactscan.org/patientguide.htm

www.ouh.nhs.uk/services/departments/radiology

www.nhs.uk/conditions/ultrasound-scan

www.nhs.uk/conditions/biopsy

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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October 2024
Review: October 2027
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