



Fine needle aspiration (FNA) and cyst aspiration

What is a fine needle aspiration (FNA)?

FNA is a quick and simple test. It removes a sample of cells from the breast so they can be examined under a microscope. We use a fine needle to take the sample.

We use ultrasound to find the area of the breast that requires examination and to guide the biopsy needle to the correct position. Sometimes FNA is performed when the abnormal area can be felt as a lump.

A doctor will perform the FNA.

What are the limitations of FNA?

The procedure may not collect enough material for a definite diagnosis.

Sometimes, even when we see many cells, the results may not be conclusive.

Before your biopsy

Before the test, we will ask if you:

- have any allergies
- have had a reaction to local anaesthetic in the past
- are currently taking any blood-thinning medications, or medications that make you bleed or bruise easily

What are the possible risks of FNA?

Possible side effects include:

Bruising and bleeding

A bruise is very common. It will disappear in a few days.

Rarely, a large, deep bruise (haematoma) develops, which is felt as a lump in the breast. This needs no special treatment, but it can take some time to disappear.

After the procedure, there may be some slight bleeding from the injection, which usually settles with compression.

Pain

Everyone's pain tolerance is different, so tell the doctor if you feel pain. They will stop the biopsy and discuss the options with you.

Fainting

If you sometimes faint during medical procedures, tell the doctor before the biopsy begins.

Infection

Infection in the breast after a biopsy is very rare.

Reaction to local anaesthetic

Allergic reactions to local anaesthetic are extremely rare.

During your biopsy

1. We will explain the test before we begin, and let you know what is happening during the test. Please let us know if anything is worrying you.
2. During the test, you will be lying down on the ultrasound table.
3. The doctor will use the ultrasound to find the area that needs to be biopsied.
4. A fine needle, similar to a needle used for taking a blood sample, is inserted through the skin into the breast tissue. This may be slightly uncomfortable.
5. The needle stays in the breast for 20-30 seconds, gently moving through the tissue collecting cells.
6. The needle is removed and pressure is applied to the breast to help prevent bruising.
7. The needle may need to be inserted into the area several times to get enough cells.
8. We will send the samples to a pathologist to be examined under a microscope.

What is cyst aspiration?

Cyst aspiration removes fluid from a breast cyst. It is similar to fine needle aspiration (FNA). Most cysts do not need aspiration; however, large tender cysts may be aspirated to reduce pain. Some cysts may be aspirated to get a sample for testing if the diagnosis is uncertain.

Cyst fluid may need to be sent to a pathologist to be examined under a microscope. Your doctor will tell you after the procedure if a sample has been sent for testing.

When you get home

You may need to take some simple pain medication such as paracetamol.

Ice packs are also useful to reduce discomfort, if there is any pain or bruising.

To minimise bruising and discomfort, you should avoid any strenuous exercise or heavy lifting for 24 hours after the biopsy.

When will I get my results?

Results from your biopsy may take up to a week.

After your biopsy, we will make an appointment to discuss your results with you.

When should I contact you?

If you have any problems or concerns after your biopsy, please contact your doctor or us. You may also go to the Emergency Department at your closest hospital if you are concerned at any stage or if you need treatment after business hours.

In particular if you have the following symptoms:

- bleeding that doesn't stop after compression
- your breast becomes red, swollen or tender

If you have chest pain or shortness of breath in the 24 hours following a breast biopsy, you should go to the Emergency Department at your closest hospital.

Assessment address

Next appointment

Date:

Time:

BreastScreen Victoria
acknowledges the support of
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