

Vacuum-assisted core biopsy



BreastScreen
Victoria

Stereotactic vacuum-assisted core biopsy (VACB)

A breast core biopsy is a test that takes a sample of breast tissue so that it can be examined under a microscope. A special biopsy needle is used to take the sample.

A vacuum-assisted stereotactic core biopsy (VACB) uses a mammogram with computer technology to guide the needle into the right position. This may be done lying on a special table, or sitting in a chair. Stereotactic core biopsy is needed where an abnormal area can be seen on a mammogram, but cannot be felt by the doctor or seen on ultrasound. VACB uses a special needle with suction to help get the sample from the breast.

A doctor performs the breast core biopsy. Core biopsy may not give a definite answer. It is not always possible to confirm or exclude cancer and more tests may be needed.

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

During your biopsy

1. The biopsy usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
2. We will explain the procedure before we start, and let you know what is happening during the test. Please let us know if anything is worrying you.
3. During a VACB, there will be some discussion between the doctor and the radiographer performing the biopsy. This is an important part of planning the biopsy.
4. You will either be asked to lie face down on a special table, or sit upright, or on your side in a chair.
5. Your breast will be compressed to hold it in place throughout the test. The compression will be less firm than a standard mammogram. It is important to keep as still as possible.

6. With your breast in position, we will take a mammogram to locate the area to be biopsied.
7. The skin of your breast is cleaned using an antiseptic. Local anaesthetic is injected to numb the area. The anaesthetic works very quickly.
8. The needle is placed into the breast and further mammograms may be taken.
9. As the first sample is taken, you will hear a loud click from the biopsy instrument. When further samples are taken, you will hear a whirring noise as the vacuum is applied and the samples are taken.
10. We will send the samples to a pathologist to examine under a microscope.
11. The doctor may place a tiny metal clip (about 2mm in length) into the area of the breast from where the sample was taken. The clip is used so the area can be easily located again if necessary. The clip is usually made of stainless steel or titanium and does not cause problems or side effects. If you do not need further treatment, it can be left safely in your breast.
12. Further mammograms may be taken of your breast and the tissue that was removed.



Ultrasound-guided vacuum-assisted core biopsy

VACB can also be done under the guidance of ultrasound rather than mammogram. The procedure will be done lying down on the ultrasound table. There will be no compression or X-ray during the procedure.

We use ultrasound to find the area of the breast that requires examination and to guide the biopsy needle to the correct position.

The steps for the procedure are the same as above, including a whirring noise from the machine. We may place a metal clip to mark the area. Further mammograms may be taken at the end of the test.

What are the possible risks of core biopsies?

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 skin cut, 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.

After your biopsy

When the procedure is finished, we apply pressure to the breast to help stop bruising and put a waterproof dressing on the skin cut. There are no stitches needed after a core biopsy.

We will give you an ice pack.

You may need to wait up to another 30 minutes after the biopsy so we can make sure everything is fine before you leave.

When you get home

You may need to take some simple pain medication such as paracetamol when the local anaesthetic wears off.

If there is any pain or bruising, ice packs are also useful to reduce discomfort.

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

The dressing is waterproof so you may shower normally. You may like to wear a bra to bed for extra support. You can remove the dressing after 3 days.

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 the Victorian Government.

