

Non-surgical Breast Biopsy

Frequently Asked Questions

Before undergoing a breast biopsy, we understand that you may have questions. Aside from providing you with the best possible diagnostic examination, we also are dedicated to educating you about your procedure. Below are frequently asked questions from patients about breast biopsy for your reference.

For more information about your breast biopsy at UPMC Magee-Womens, call **412-641-4700**, **1-800-649-4077**, or visit UPMC.com/MageeSees.

What is a non-surgical breast biopsy?

A non-surgical breast biopsy is a term used to describe techniques that do not require surgery to obtain samples of cells or tissue from the breast. Often called a needle biopsy, this procedure uses imaging equipment (ultrasound or stereotactic x-ray) to precisely locate an area in the breast, and uses a special needle to remove a tiny piece of tissue. A non-surgical breast biopsy does not require general anesthesia. It is a common procedure used to diagnose breast abnormalities.

What will happen during the biopsy?

Non-surgical breast biopsy involves a five-step process:

1. **Numbing of the breast with local anesthesia.**
2. **Imaging the breast to identify the biopsy area.**
3. **Inserting the biopsy needle into the breast to retrieve tissue samples.**
4. **Evaluating the tissue sample.**
5. **Marking the biopsy site for future reference.**

In some cases, a clip may be placed to mark the site of the biopsy. This is nothing to be alarmed about, as this is the standard of care following the biopsy and is not painful to the patient. If the patient goes on to surgery, the clip can be removed at that time, however it is typically permanent. A post-biopsy "light touch" mammogram will be performed, if a clip has been used, to verify the clip position. If you have questions or concerns about the clip, please discuss with the radiologist before your biopsy.

Are there different types of breast biopsy procedures?

Ultrasound-Guided Breast Biopsy

Ultrasound, also called sonography, uses high-frequency sound waves to visualize structures in the body. During this procedure, you will be required to lie on an examination table. The radiologist will perform a breast ultrasound. Once the area that is to be sampled is located, the radiologist will place a mark on your breast. The radiologist will use ultrasound to guide the needle to the proper position. The radiologist will take several samples of breast tissue to ensure that an adequate sample is obtained. Pressure to the biopsy site will be held for 10 to 15 minutes to prevent bleeding.

Stereotactic-Guided Breast Biopsy

A stereotactic breast biopsy is performed using special computerized x-ray equipment to locate an area that can be seen on a mammogram. Stereotactic x-ray is frequently used to sample small deposits of calcium that can be visualized on a mammogram. You will be required to lie on your stomach on a special table that has an opening for the breast. The hardest part of this examination is lying still on your stomach. Breast tissue samples are then obtained using a special biopsy needle. Pressure to the biopsy site will be held for 10 to 15 minutes to prevent bleeding.

MRI-Guided Breast Biopsy

MRI-guided biopsy is a low-risk procedure using MRI imaging to guide a small needle into the breast and remove cells from the area of concern. A certified technologist will first inject contrast through an IV into your arm. No radiation is used. Using MRI imaging as a guide, the physician will perform a minimally invasive procedure to remove cells from the abnormal breast tissue. The cells are then sent to a specialized team in the laboratory to determine if further treatment is required. A follow-up mammogram will be taken after the biopsy.

You should plan on being at the breast center for two to 2 ½ hours for any biopsy.

*Non-surgical Breast Biopsy FAQ's (continued)***How should I prepare for a breast biopsy?**

- If you are taking daily dosages of aspirin, aspirin-containing products, or NSAIDs you are required to discontinue the medication for seven days prior to the biopsy. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the breast center nurse for clarification.
- If you take blood-thinning medication, such as Coumadin®, warfarin, heparin, or Pradaxa®, Plavix®, please contact your personal physician to determine if you are able to safely discontinue the medication in preparation for the biopsy procedure.
- On the day of your procedure, bring a written order from your physician documenting medical necessity for the biopsy.
- The stereotactic biopsy table has a weight restriction of 300 pounds. If your weight exceeds 300 pounds, please inform the nurse.

Is there anything I should do differently on the day of my breast biopsy?

- Please eat a light meal prior to coming for your biopsy.
- You may take Tylenol® one hour before the procedure to make you more comfortable.
- Wear a two-piece outfit on the day of the procedure. We recommend that you bring a supportive bra (or sports bra) with you to wear after the procedure to minimize breast motion and discomfort.
- Report 30 minutes prior to your scheduled procedure time. This will allow adequate time to park your car, register, and prepare for the procedure. The benefits and risks of the procedure will be explained and you will be asked to sign a consent form.
- If you are pregnant or think you may be, inform the technologist, nurse, and/or physician who is performing your test.

How will I feel after my breast biopsy?

Most women are able to resume normal activity shortly after a needle biopsy; however, it is not uncommon to feel pain or discomfort. You may experience some bruising of the area that should resolve in seven to 10 days. The tips below may be useful following your procedure:

- If you experience discomfort after your biopsy, you may take an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as Tylenol® (acetaminophen). Do not take aspirin, aspirin products, ibuprofen, or other over-the-counter medications, such as Advil®, Aleve®, or Motrin® for 24 hours after your biopsy. If you are unsure of a particular over-the-counter medication, please check with your pharmacist.

- A cloth-covered ice pack should be applied to the biopsy site to reduce bruising and swelling for the first 24 hours following the biopsy. Place the ice pack on the biopsy site for 15 to 20 minutes at a time and remove. Repeat every two hours while awake.
- Wearing a supportive bra (or sports bra) is strongly encouraged for 24 hours after the biopsy.
- Do not remove the dressing or bandage for at least 24 hours.
- Keep the dressing dry. Do not allow the biopsy site to get wet for 24 hours following the biopsy.
- Do not participate in strenuous activities for at least 24 hours following your biopsy (no pushing, lifting, or pulling greater than 10 pounds).
- You may resume taking your medications, but if you are on blood thinners, contact your physician to determine when you should resume taking your prescribed dose.
- Warm compresses may be used after 48 hours to ease the discomfort.
- Monitor your biopsy site for signs of inflammation, excessive bleeding, or pressure. If you experience swelling, bleeding, drainage, redness, or heat in the area of the biopsy, call our nurse at **412-641-1484** between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Should you experience any complication after 4 p.m. or on the weekend, please call **412-641-1000** and ask to speak with the radiology fellow on call or the attending physician. If the bleeding is excessive, please report to the nearest emergency department.

How will I get my biopsy results?

We understand that waiting for the results can be an unnerving experience. During this time it is important to remember that most breast biopsies turn out to be benign (non-cancerous). The nurse will call to inform you of the results of the biopsy as soon as the results are received from the pathology department. This usually takes two to four business days after the biopsy.

What should I do if breast cancer is detected?

If your biopsy indicates cancer, you will be referred to the Magee-Womens Breast Cancer Program for treatment. Our program is nationally ranked and offers an array of the most advanced treatment options available, including surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and hormonal therapies, along with complementary therapies. Physicians specially trained in the management of breast cancer will review your case with you and customize a personalized treatment plan. Our supportive care team can help you and your loved ones manage the many emotions and questions that may arise throughout the diagnosis, treatment, and recovery process.

For more information, call 412-641-4700 or 1-800-649-4077.