

# Your vacuum excision biopsy of the breast

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet is designed to give you information about aftercare following a vacuum excision biopsy of the breast. We hope it will answer the questions that you or those who care for you may have. This leaflet is not meant to replace the consultation between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed.

### Why do I need a vacuum excision biopsy

Your previous biopsy has found an area of your breast that needs further investigation. The vacuum excision biopsy will allow us to do this by taking a sample from a wider area around the first biopsy site, giving us more breast tissue to look at to help with a diagnosis. This additional tissue will be analysed in a laboratory and you will have an appointment to discuss the results.

### Vacuum excision biopsy procedure

A needle is inserted and then gentle suction is used to obtain the samples. You may hear a sucking and whirring sound. There may be some discomfort for brief periods, but people generally manage the procedure well. Pressure will then be applied to the area for at least 10 minutes to stop any bleeding and reduce bruising afterwards.

You will have a pressure dressing put on the wound once it has stopped bleeding. This should stay in place for 48 hours, after which you can remove it.

We will ask you to wait in the department for at least another 20 minutes to be sure there is no further bleeding.

Sometimes a tiny metal clip is inserted and left in your breast where the biopsy is taken from; this allows the same area to be easily identified again if needed. This clip is designed to remain permanently in your breast. If you go on to have surgery the clip will be removed. It is safe at airports and for MRI examinations. If you require an MRI scan in the future and the clip has not been removed, you should notify the person performing the scan.

### Consent

Before the procedure, a member of the team will explain what it involves and answer any questions you may have. You will then be asked for your written consent. If you do not

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understand what you are being told, let the team member know so they can explain again. The biopsy will not happen without your consent.

## Advantages of vacuum excision biopsy

Vacuum excision biopsies are completed in a couple of hours with a local anaesthetic used to numb the area. You can go home or back to work in the same day. The incision into the breast is also only a few millimetres.

## Risks:

- Bruising

When the local anaesthetic has worn off, it is common to have some bruising and discomfort for a couple of days. In a small number of cases, the bruising may be significant (please see section below "Is there anything I need to look out for?").

Wearing a good supportive non-wired bra, such as a sports bra, for the first 48 hours after your biopsy may help reduce any discomfort. The dressing you have over your biopsy site will help to prevent bleeding and subsequent bruising. The dressing can be removed 48 hours after your biopsy, and you may find it easier to do this by soaking it off in the shower.

- Pain

If you experience any pain or discomfort, you can take paracetamol to relieve this, following the instructions on the packet. Do not take aspirin, as this could cause further bleeding. If you take blood-thinning medications (such as warfarin), please contact your anticoagulant clinic for further advice.

- Other risks

There is a small risk of infection when a needle passes through the skin. There is also a small chance that it is not possible to get the tissue sample that has been planned. In this case, the wider care team (known as a multi-disciplinary team) will discuss what to do next. Another attempt at a biopsy or surgery may be needed. Occasionally analysis of the sample from the vacuum excision biopsy may show cancer even though the original biopsy was benign (non-cancerous).

## Is there anything I need to look out for?

If you notice that the wound is bleeding, or the bruise is visibly growing, press hard on the area for 10 minutes. If this doesn't stop the bleeding or if the bruise continues to get bigger, contact the breast care nurse team, your own GP or your nearest accident & emergency department. If you take blood-thinning medications (such as warfarin), please contact your anticoagulant clinic for advice.

If you experience chest pain or shortness of breath, contact your GP or nearest accident & emergency department as soon as possible.

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## When can I get back to normal?

You should be able to resume your normal activities, such as driving or going back to work, immediately after your appointment. However, we advise you not to undertake strenuous exercise for 48 hours. You need to keep the dressing dry for 48 hours after application, so you can have a shallow bath but need to avoid showering during this time.

## When will I get the results?

You will be sent an appointment to discuss the results of your biopsy with the breast surgical team. It can take up to 10 days before a result is available, as the tissue sample requires careful preparation before it can be examined under the microscope and all biopsy results are discussed at the weekly breast multi-disciplinary team meeting. If you do not receive a letter for an appointment within 10 days of your biopsy, please contact the breast nursing team via the Macmillan navigator service, see telephone number below.

## Who do I contact for more help or information?

It is very important that all of your questions about the biopsy procedure are answered and that you have all the information you need about your care. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has a Macmillan navigator service for access to your clinical nurse specialist and other members of the clinical team. Navigators can also help with queries and provide a range of other information, help and support relating to your care. The service is available Monday to Friday 08:30 to 16:30 (excluding bank holidays).

Telephone: 020 3313 0303

The Breast Care Nurse provides specialist support and advice regarding the wound post biopsy and any related queries.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777**. You can also email PALS at [pals@imperial.nhs.net](mailto:pals@imperial.nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, Fourth Floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

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This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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