

Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) for breast lumps

This is a procedure that allows fluid to be drained from cysts and can be used to obtain cell samples for analysis. The consultant, registrar or nurse practitioner will perform the fine needle aspiration using a needle and syringe and although this may feel uncomfortable, it is usually over very quickly.

If a lump is found on examination, ultrasound or mammography, it is important to find out for certain whether it is benign (non-cancerous) and can be safely left in place or whether it needs removing. In the past this was done by removing the lump for examination under the microscope. This involved coming into hospital and having an operation under anaesthetic, with the inconvenience, discomfort, slight risk and delay that involved. Fine needle aspiration cytology (FNA) often allows a reliable diagnosis to be made without all this trouble. Not only can it be done immediately in the clinic but the result of the test may be available the same day.

What does having a fine needle aspiration involve?

Using a needle and syringe, as is normally employed for taking blood, the needle is passed through the skin into the lump and a small sample is removed to be looked at under the microscope. This may be done by feeling the lump or by using an ultrasound scan. The whole procedure lasts about 30 seconds. A little pressure is put on the skin where the needle went in and then a small plaster is put over the puncture site.

You will probably get a small bruise on your breast afterwards. Rarely does anyone get more than a little bruised discomfort, but if it is sore, then you can take a simple painkiller such as paracetamol afterwards. The plaster can be removed within a few hours.

What happens to the sample that has been taken?

The sample is delivered to the Pathology laboratory where it is examined under a microscope. Pathology will then let us know whether:

- The sample shows benign cells only and that there is no need to remove the lump.
- That the lump is cancerous and needs to be treated, or
- That the sample does not have enough cells in it to decide (which often happens if the lump is very fibrous), or that the cells present are not clearly cancerous or non-cancerous and that the test should be repeated or the lump removed by surgery for full examination.

How do I get the results?

The result may be available by the end of the day (only if attendance is on a Wednesday morning) and you will either be given the result at that time, or you will receive written confirmation of the result. If we find anything unexpected, one of the breast care team will either ring you up at home with the result or ask you to return at the end of the clinic to receive the result in person. We sometimes will ask you to ring in for the result after 2 weeks and will give you the necessary telephone numbers.

Contact us

If you have any problems regarding your care or treatment at this hospital, please *Talk to us*. Your feedback will help us to improve and develop our service. Please speak to a member of staff in the clinic or on the ward or if you would rather talk to a senior member of staff, ask to speak to the ward/departmental manager or matron.

Or speak to the Patient Relations Team who can offer you 'on the spot' support and advice as well as practical information at a time when you are feeling confused and anxious. Patient Relations can be contacted on: 0118 322 8338 or ask a member of staff, the receptionists or the switchboard to contact them.

Nurse Practitioners

Carol Lister 0118 322 8672

Vanessa Burridge 0118 322 7895

Nicky Woodrow 0118 322 7895

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 3): 0118 322 6890 email: CAT3@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

More information

If you have any questions about the procedure or this information, please speak to your doctor or nurse.

For more information about the Trust visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Breast Care Clinic, January 2005

Reviewed January 2018

Review due: January 2020