Information for Patients Undergoing Vacuum Assisted Core Biopsy of the Breast

This leaflet explains more about having a vacuum assisted core biopsy of the breast (VACB); it explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It also provides information in what to expect during the procedure.

What is a Vacuum Assisted Core Biopsy (VACB)?

The VACB is a simple and quick method of taking samples of breast tissue which can be sent to the pathology department to be examined under a microscope and provide your Doctor with a diagnosis. The VACB can be carried out using either x rays (x-ray guided) or ultrasound (ultrasound guided) depending on the position of the abnormality in your breast. The doctor will discuss this with you to decide the best method in your case and you will be asked to sign a consent form for the procedure.

Why do I need a VACB?

The doctor has recommended that you have a vacuum assisted core biopsy of the breast (VACB) because your mammogram (breast x- ray) or ultrasound (scan) has shown an abnormality. The majority of abnormalities are benign (innocent) and present no health risk to the patient, but it is important that we find out exactly what the abnormality is in your case.

Who will be doing the VACB?

The biopsy will be carried out by either a Breast Radiologist, a doctor who specialises in x rays, or an Advanced Radiographic Practitioner (ADVP), a radiographer who has been specially trained in breast biopsies.

Where will the procedure take place?

Both X-ray and ultrasound guided VACBs are carried out in the Mammography Department in Radiology. The doctor will discuss this with you to decide the best method in your case and you will be asked to sign a consent form for the procedure.

How do I prepare for my biopsy?

There is no specific preparation for this examination. Please let us know prior to your procedure if you are on medication to thin your blood, such as warfarin, aspirin or Clopidogrel by contacting the department on 01422 224282

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What actually happens during my biopsy?

Ultrasound guided VACB –

You will be asked to lie on your back on an examination couch. The doctor will examine your breast using the ultrasound machine to pinpoint the area that will be biopsied. You will be given an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area and the doctor will use the vacuum assisted biopsy machine to remove some samples of breast tissue.

X-ray Guided VACB -

You will be either be sat or asked to lie down on a special examination couch. Your breast will be positioned in the x ray machine and compressed as it was for your mammogram examination. The Advance radiographic practitioner will take x rays to check you are in the right position. When you are in the correct position two x rays will be taken at different angles, these are called “stereo images” and are used with the computer to find the exact position for the biopsy needle.

You will be given an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area to be biopsied. This will sting initially but after that you should not feel any pain.

The procedure uses a vacuum system to remove the samples and you will be able to hear a noise a bit like a hairdryer while the samples are taken.

Following the biopsy a tiny metallic marker is placed in the breast to mark the area where the biopsy was taken. You will not be able to feel the marker and it will not affect you in any way in the future.

What are the risks?

Complications from VACB are rare. However as with any procedure there are some risks associated with it. They include:

- Internal bruising in the breast following the procedure. We try to minimse the bruising by placing firm pressure on the breast immediately after the biopsy.
- Rarely the biopsy site can start to bleed after you have left the department. We will give you instructions on what to do if this happens.
- Infection of the biopsy site is also rare and the wound is covered with a sterile dressing to protect the area.
- There is a small risk that the abnormality is in a part of the breast which proves difficult to obtain good tissue samples. This may lead to an inconclusive biopsy result and your doctor may advise an alternative investigation. See section below in regard to alternatives.

Does the procedure hurt?

The procedure should not be painful. There will be some stinging when the local anaesthetic is first injected but after this the area will become numb. You will feel some pressure on your breast as the biopsy is taken and staff will check regularly that you are comfortable and not feeling pain.
Most women feel fine after the procedure and are able to resume normal light activities. However we would recommend that you avoid strenuous exercise for at least 24 hours following the biopsy. If possible it is best to go home and put your feet up and relax for at least a few hours after the procedure.

How long will it take?

Please be aware you will be here for a minimum of an hour due to the length of the procedure and with the aftercare you may need..

What happens afterwards?

Once the test is finished, the ADVP will apply pressure to the biopsy site for fifteen minutes, to reduce bleeding and bruising. She will apply some paper stitches and a dressing then you will be asked to get dressed and sit in the waiting area for a further 10 minutes with a cup of tea/coffee and biscuits to ensure you feel well and there is no further bleeding before you go home. You will also be given some aftercare information before leaving the department.

What are the alternatives to VACB?

Some alternative procedures for removing samples of breast tissue are;

Fine needle aspiration (FNA) - this test can often not give conclusive results and you would require further tests.

Diagnostic open biopsy – this is performed in theatre under general anaesthetic and would result in significant scarring of the breast and a short stay in hospital.

Your doctor will discuss which procedure is best for you.

Most ladies find lying on the couch quite comfortable, but you must let staff know if you have any problems with the position so that they can make adjustments to help you.

Finally...

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Advanced Practitioner Mammography
Calderdale Royal Hospital
Telephone No: 01422 224282

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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