

BREAST BIOPSY OPEN

GENERAL INFORMATION

Thousands of women have breast masses that may cause them concern. These masses can be smaller than a pea or as large as an orange. There may be one mass or many masses. They can be solid or filled with fluid. Some are benign and others are likely to be cancerous; a lot of them are in between. Some masses can be felt whereas some are seen only on mammography. Because not all masses are the same, they do not all need to have a sample taken of them in the same way.

DIAGNOSIS

The majority of these breast lumps are not cancerous. If a risk of cancer is small your doctor may recommend careful observation. Generally, if the risk of cancer is thought to be greater than 2%, removing some of the suspicious tissue for testing is recommended. A biopsy can be done in one of several ways i.e. fine needle aspiration, needle core biopsy or open biopsy.

After careful consideration of all the factors your doctor has recommended that you have a biopsy of the tissue in your breast and that this be done through a standard open incision.

PRE-OPERATIVE CARE

Your doctor will explain to you whether he will do the biopsy under local or general anaesthetic. If under general anaesthetic you must not have anything to eat or drink for 6 hours before the operation. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you take, especially medicines which may affect blood clotting.

OPERATION

Under local or general anaesthetic your breast will be cleaned with an antiseptic. A cosmetically acceptable incision will be made. Tissue removed will be sent to the laboratory for examination. The bleeding in the wound will be stopped and the skin will be closed in an acceptable manner. Your doctor may or may not decide to leave a drain in the wound.

POST OPERATIVE CARE

You will initially be carefully observed in a recovery room and will be monitored. When you are stable you will be transferred back to your regular hospital bed. Your doctor will discuss with you whether you may go home the same day or whether you will be required to remain in hospital overnight.

HOME CARE

Your doctor will discuss post operative home activities with you. He will explain to you when you may resume normal activities, when you may drive and when you may return to work. Your doctor will discuss bathing and showering with you and will instruct you when to have the sutures removed.

COMPLICATIONS

1. Complications are not common after a BREAST BIOPSY, but you must be aware of the following possible complications.
2. A bleed or haematoma at the site of a BREAST BIOPSY does sometimes occur, even in spite of a drain having been left in. Depending on the extent of this bleed, this does sometimes need a repeat operation to evacuate the haematoma.
3. The wound of a BREAST BIOPSY rarely becomes infected. If this happens, it may necessitate dressings or other active management.
4. The scar after this operation is usually quite satisfactory, but some patients may end up with an

unattractive scar.

5. Systemic complications like venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are rare, but possible after any operation or anaesthetic.

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