

Having a mammogram guided breast biopsy procedure

What is a mammogram guided diagnostic procedure?

A mammogram guided breast biopsy procedure uses mammogram imaging as a guide to obtain a sample from affected area for further tests

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a specialist x-ray of the breasts.

It uses a small amount of ionising radiation to produce detailed images that help doctors detect changes in breast tissue, even before they can be noticed. The amount of radiation used is kept as low as possible while still producing images that are useful for diagnosis.

Why do I need a mammogram guided biopsy procedure?

Other tests that you have had may have shown an area around your breast or axilla that needs further investigation. From the scans (ultrasound, CT, MRI, etc.), it is not always possible to determine what an abnormal area is. In this case, it is necessary to obtain a sample for a laboratory test.

You may be recommended that this procedure is needed by the doctor who has examined you. This will be based on the clinical query for your examination or on what the mammogram images have shown.

What happens during a mammogram guided diagnostic procedure?

We will explain the procedure and ask for your consent.

You will be asked to undress to the waist.

The radiographer will position your breasts on the specially designed mammography machine. To obtain good and clear pictures the breast must be gently compressed between two plates for a few seconds.

Some people find this uncomfortable, and a few find it painful because of the compression needed to ensure good images are obtained. If you do experience pain it usually only lasts as long as the mammogram.

A breast specialist will perform the procedure with the support of an assistant. The procedure can take 15 to 30 minutes to complete. We will ask if you have any allergies. The area to be investigated will then be numbed with local anaesthetic given we are using a very fine needle. You may feel a slight stinging as the local anaesthetic is given, but this will wear off quickly.



When the area is numb, a small cut will be made in the skin and using the mammogram images as a guide, the biopsy needle will be inserted into your breast to obtain an adequate sample. This may take several minutes. This procedure should not be painful, but you may feel a pushing sensation and internal movements. If you do feel pain while the samples are being taken, please tell us straight away. After the samples have been taken, pressure will be applied to the area before securing a dressing over the wound.

Is there any preparation for a mammogram guided diagnostic procedure?

Please contact the radiology team if you are taking any anticoagulation drugs (for example aspirin, apixaban, heparin, warfarin or clopidogrel) before your procedure.

Please don't use spray deodorant on the day of the procedure, as this may affect the quality of the x-ray.

You should wear a top and bottom instead of a dress for easier undressing.

It is important that you tell us if you have mobility difficulties.

What are the risks?

We will expose you to ionising radiation during this examination. We are all exposed to ionising radiation every day from natural sources such as cosmic rays, soil, rocks, and even food. Ionising radiation can cause cell damage which, after many years, may very rarely turn cancerous. The estimated risk from a mammogram is less than 0.01%, which is very small. The benefits of early detection far outweigh this risk.

Before your mammogram, we ensure that:

- The benefits of your examination outweigh the risks.
- The radiation dose is kept as low as reasonably achievable.
- The amount of radiation we use is tailored to you.
- Equipment is regularly tested and maintained to ensure safety and optimal performance.

Are there any complications?

- Allergic reactions are rarely seen due to the type of local anaesthetic we use. However, you may experience skin redness, rash or hives.
- Very rarely a wound might begin to bleed a little after you have left the hospital. You should apply direct pressure to the wound for twenty minutes. The wound should then stop bleeding. If for any reason the wound continues to bleed, you need to contact the Royal Marsden hotline (details below) and/or attend your nearest A&E.

What happens after the mammogram guided diagnostic procedure?

The radiographer will press firmly over the area for a few minutes to stop any bleeding and reduce any bruising.



Sticky paper strips and a self-adhesive waterproof dressing will be applied to the wound. You should keep the dressing on for 72 hours, after which it can be removed along with the sticky paper strips. Please keep your wound clean and dry during the first 72 hours. Occasionally it is necessary to use a more substantial pressure dressing. If this is the case, we will give you any extra instructions at the time, and this is advised to remain on for no longer than 24 hours.

Most people feel fine following the procedure and return to their normal routine straight away. However, we recommend that you avoid strenuous exercise for 24 hours to give the wound time to heal. You should feel fine to drive home.

A follow-up appointment will be arranged to receive the result of your biopsy before you leave.

What can I expect after the mammogram guided diagnostic procedure?

As after any medical procedure you may experience some side effects. The possible side effects are explained below.

Bruising – this is common and may make the area feel lumpy.

Aching or tenderness – if you are experiencing tenderness around the affected area, this can be relieved by taking a painkiller such as paracetamol.

Where can I get further information?

The staff in the Radiology department will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please ask at the time of your appointment or telephone the department at any time.

Sutton: 0208 661 3588/89

Chelsea: 020 7811 8366

Cavendish Square: 020 7811 8941

If you feel unwell or have concerns about your health, please contact:

The Royal Marsden Hotline 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments. This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

