

Fine Needle Aspiration



For further information please
speak with your doctor



Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) Biopsy

What is a fine needle biopsy?

Fine needle biopsy is a procedure that involves placing a needle into a lump and removing a sample of cells or a small amount of tissue for a Pathologist to examine. The lump can be located anywhere on your body, but most commonly involves your thyroid gland, breast, skin, lymph or salivary glands.

To ensure that the exact location is being sampled, ultrasound or X-ray may be used for deeper lumps.

Who can perform the fine needle biopsy?

The biopsy can be performed by an experienced Doctor such as a Clinician, Pathologist or Radiologist. A specialist Cytopathologist then examines the cells.

Is the needle biopsy painful?

The procedure should be no more painful than having a blood sample taken.

Does the procedure produce scarring?

No. The needle used in a fine needle biopsy is short and thin, leaving no scars. This is one advantage of this method.

Does the procedure require an anaesthetic?

Anaesthetic is rarely required. However, under special circumstances a local anaesthetic may be used. You may safely drive home after such a procedure.

How long does the fine needle biopsy take?

The procedure only takes a few seconds. You may, however, be in the clinic for 20 to 30 minutes if more than one biopsy has to be taken to obtain enough tissue for examination by the Pathologist.

Are there complications associated with fine needle biopsy?

The test is relatively safe. Bruising or slight bleeding may occur around the collection site. If any problems arise following the biopsy, please see your referring Doctor.

What does the result mean?

The FNA specimens are examined for any abnormalities like cancerous cells using a microscope. A lump or mass does not necessarily indicate the presence of cancer. The FNA procedure often reveals that a suspicious lump or mass is actually benign or cystic.

There are three categories of results:

- **Benign:** The lump or growth is under control and has not spread to other areas of the body. There are no cancerous cells present.
- **Malignant:** The cells are cancerous. They have the potential to or have spread to other areas of the body.
- **Non-Diagnostic:** The results are unclear. A surgical biopsy may be required.

When are the test results available?

An interim result may be available shortly after the procedure. The final result will be available in approximately 1-2 working days unless further tests are requested. The result will be given to you by your Doctor.

How do I make an appointment for fine needle biopsy?

Your referring Doctor may make the booking on your behalf or may give you details of a radiology practice that you will need to contact. The analysis of your pathology specimen will be arranged by the radiology practice.