

Having a CT biopsy

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What is a CT guided biopsy?

A CT (Computed Tomography) guided biopsy is a procedure that takes a small sample of tissue using a fine needle.

Why is it needed?

Other tests that you have had, such as a previous CT scan or ultrasound scan, have shown an area of abnormal tissue inside your body. A biopsy involves collecting a small sample of this tissue to determine the diagnosis.

What does it involve?

The test involves signing a consent form after the doctor has explained the procedure to you. You then need to change into a hospital gown and are asked to lie on your front or your back on the CT scanner. A routine CT scan is performed to line up where the biopsy is to be taken. Antiseptic solution is applied to the skin. Local anaesthetic is used to numb the area – this may sting for a few seconds before going numb. Once the radiologist is happy with the position, a sample of tissue is taken using a biopsy needle.

How long will it take?

A biopsy normally takes about 30 minutes from start to finish. You will need to lie still for this time on the CT scanner.

Where is it done?

In the radiology department – please report to radiology reception A on arrival.

If you come through the main hospital entrance, take the second corridor on your right (just before the coffee shop). Continue half way down the corridor and then take a left turn to the radiology reception desk.

What preparations are needed?

Please take your normal medications in the morning along with a light breakfast. For example tea and toast and then do not have anything else to eat or drink.

If you are on anticoagulants such as warfarin, or anti-platelets such as aspirin or clopidogrel, we recommend you discuss this with your doctor as soon as possible to ensure the correct drug regime is in place for your biopsy. You may need to stop taking these drugs a few days before your biopsy.

Before the test

The specialist will see you on the day of the examination. You will then be able to ask any questions or discuss any concerns that you may have.

You will also be asked to sign a consent form to allow the procedure to be carried out.

This leaflet has been written to enable you to make an informed decision in relation to agreeing to the treatment.

The consent form is an important legal document, therefore please read it carefully.

Once you have read and understood all the information, including the possibility of complications and you agree to undergo the investigation, please sign and date the consent form. You will notice that the consent form is duplicated, allowing you to keep a copy for your records.

How will I feel during the test?

Most biopsies do not hurt. The local anaesthetic stings a little before numbing the area at the beginning of the biopsy. Sometimes the biopsy needle itself can cause discomfort, but this is usually minor. Most times however, after the local anaesthetic, there is little or no discomfort with just a sensation of pressure.

What happens after the test?

After the procedure we will ask you to rest for four hours and we will monitor you, usually in the radiology recovery area. If you have a uneventful recovery you will be able to go home. If there are any complications you may need to stay in hospital for a short time.

Please arrange for someone to drive you home. You may drive the next day. Please have a responsible adult with you for the next 24 hours in case of rare delayed complications.

Are there any risks?

A CT guided biopsy is considered to be a relatively low-risk procedure, but as with any medical procedure there is a degree of risk and the possibility that complications could arise. The main complications are bleeding and infection. These complications occur rarely, in less than 1 in 100 biopsies.

There is the possibility that the results of the procedure will not provide your consultant with enough information to make a diagnosis. If this is the case, it may be necessary to repeat the CT guided biopsy, or consider an alternative.

The risks and complications of the procedure will be explained to you before you give your consent. Please ask any questions that you have.

Follow-up

The results will take approximately three to seven working days and will be sent to the person who referred you for the biopsy.

What should I do when I get home?

Rest for the remainder of the day.

Take your normal painkillers if you have pain. However, please **do not take aspirin for 24 hours after biopsy**.

Keep the dressing dry for the next 24 hours. It may be removed after 48 hours.

Bleeding from the puncture site is rare but if there is any, press on the wound site for 10 to 20 minutes and it should stop.

We advise you to take the day following your biopsy off work, particularly if your job involves lifting.

Further information

If you have any questions leading up to your biopsy, please contact one of the radiology nursing team on 01271 311869.

References

Pan Birmingham Cancer Network. Feb 2011

Weston Area Health NHS trust 2010

Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS trust 2009

Oxford University Hospital NHS trust 2013

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

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Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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