Breast Biopsy

You may be thinking that needing a breast biopsy means you have cancer, but statistically, that's not the case. It may give you hope to learn that 80% of breast biopsies are benign.

There are a few reasons you may need a breast biopsy after an abnormal result from a mammogram, ultrasound or breast exam. Things like benign cysts, fibroadenomas or calcifications may show up on a mammogram, or there may even be imaging issues that could require another look. When you have an abnormal result, your doctor will likely recommend a core needle biopsy.

What is a core needle breast biopsy?

This biopsy uses a needle to take samples of tissue that are then examined under a microscope. There are three ways to receive a core needle biopsy:

Stereotactic-guided breast biopsy:

This method uses a computer to calculate the position of the area that is biopsied and is often used for calcifications or calcium deposits. **Here's what you can expect:**

- Your breast will be compressed while you sit or lie down, and several images will be taken to confirm the area to be biopsied.
- Your skin will be washed with an antibacterial solution.
- Your radiologist will numb the breast with a local anesthetic.
- A small incision will be made where the biopsy needle will enter.
- Multiple samples of the tissue will be taken.

Things to know:

- You should only feel pressure. If you feel anything else, let us know.
- Body stiffness may occur, but it is important not to move during your procedure.
- Your radiologist may leave a small metallic tissue marker in the breast to identify the biopsy area during future visits.
- You'll have a mammogram after the biopsy to document the placement of this marker.

Ultrasound-guided breast biopsy:

This kind of biopsy uses sound waves instead of X-rays.

- You'll lie on your back, but your breast won't be compressed.
- The radiologist will view a monitor as the biopsy needle is placed in position and a tissue sample is taken.
- After that, the remaining steps of the ultrasound-guided biopsy are similar to those for a stereotactic biopsy.

MRI-guided breast biopsy:

MRI-guided biopsies use a powerful magnetic field, radio waves and a computer to help locate any abnormalities. This procedure usually takes about 45 minutes.

- In most cases, you'll lie face down on a moveable exam table, and your breast will be positioned into an opening in the table.
- A nurse or tech will insert an IV to administer contrast material. This helps guide your care team in the procedure.
- Your breast will be compressed, and the doctor will inject a local anesthetic.
- Your radiologist then inserts the needle and collects the tissue to be biopsied.

What is recovery like?

It won't take much time to recover from a core biopsy, and scarring is rare. If you're in any pain or discomfort, try taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen. You can also try an ice pack in your bra. Your doctor will ask that you avoid strenuous activity for the 24 hours after your procedure.

If you notice bleeding, swelling, redness or heat, notify your physician.

What happens next?

Tissue samples taken during your biopsy are sent to be examined by a pathologist. The findings will be sent to your physician.

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