

What is a Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy?

Your doctor has recommended that you have a fine-needle aspiration biopsy. You or your doctor has felt a lump and it is important to determine the nature of this lump. The most common possibilities are scars, cysts, infections, inflammation, and tumors. Establishing a diagnosis often requires microscopic examination of a sample of the lump ("mass") by a specially trained doctor called a *pathologist*. Fine-needle aspiration biopsy is a rapid and reliable (though not perfect) method of sampling any palpable lump. It is not appropriate for sampling lumps which cannot be felt; such lumps must be sampled by a radiologist under ultrasound or CT guidance. Based on the diagnostic findings of your biopsy, your doctor will determine your treatment.

Scheduling Your Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy

- **Scheduling Your Biopsy:** Your doctor's office may assist you in scheduling your biopsy. Or, some patients may call to set up their own appointments. Call (415) 600-2200 to schedule your biopsy and select # 3 (Pathology) on the phone recording options.
- Fine-needle aspiration biopsies are performed at the California Campus of California Pacific Medical Center.
- **Name:** _____
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial)
- **Date and Time:** ____/____/____ ____ a.m. ____ p.m.

What Do I Need to Know Before the Fine-Needle Aspiration?

- Take your regular medications prior to the test.
- There is no special preparation for this procedure. The procedure takes 30 minutes.
- **If you are coming from home, you will need to pre-register 15 minutes before your scheduled biopsy test.** Note: Please refer to page 2 for where to go to pre-register. Bring your insurance information.
- If you are a patient in the hospital, the biopsy will be done in your hospital room.

Where Do I Pre-Register and Where Do I Go for the Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy?

1

Pre-Register in Admitting/Outpatient Registration

Pre-Register 15 minutes before your scheduled biopsy. Pre-register at 3700 California Street, Outpatient Registration, Lobby Level.

2

Go to the California Campus for Your Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy

Department of Pathology - (415) 600-2200
 3700 California Street, 4th Floor
 (Take the "C" elevators to the fourth floor and follow the signs)
 Room 4410

Map of California Campus 3700 California Street



What are the Limitations of Fine-Needle Aspiration Biopsy?

With fine-needle aspiration the cause of your lump can be determined in a majority of cases. However, no medical procedure is 100% accurate. The chance of your biopsy failing to find a malignancy (cancer) when it is present is approximately 5%, depending on the site of the body sampled. Therefore, do not take a benign diagnosis as a reason to ignore your lump. You and your doctor should continue to watch the area. If the lump enlarges, you may need to have another fine needle aspiration or an open surgical biopsy.

During the Procedure

- In general, a local anesthetic is not used for this type of procedure as local anesthesia also requires a needle injection, and may interfere with sampling. Most patients tolerate this quite well, reporting that it is similar to blood drawing. However, depending on the site of your biopsy and other special circumstances, the pathologist may sometimes inject a local anesthetic or use a cream to numb the skin.
- A small needle is used to remove cells, small pieces of tissue, and sometimes fluid from the lump.
- Usually, the lump will be sampled 2 to 4 times in order to obtain adequate sampling of cells to make a diagnosis.
- After the pathologist has taken a sample or several samples, you will be asked to wait for a few minutes. During this time, the pathologist will examine the cells under a microscope to make sure that samples are adequate for evaluation. If the sample is not adequate, the pathologist may perform another biopsy.
- At the end of the procedure, the biopsy site can be covered with a Band-Aid ® (adhesive bandage).

Notes & Questions to Ask My Doctor

What Can I Expect After the Procedure?

- After the procedure, the biopsy site may be tender or show some bruising. You may place an ice pack over the biopsy site for 20 minutes only and then remove it. We suggest taking Tylenol (Acetaminophen) rather than aspirin for discomfort. Otherwise, no special care is required.
- You will be able to leave the hospital immediately after the procedure.
- You may drive yourself home after the procedure.
- You may resume your normal activities.
- You may remove the Band-Aid® (adhesive bandage) the evening of the biopsy.
- You may shower after your biopsy. Do not use a hot tub or whirlpool bath for 24 hours.

Call Your Doctor if You Have Any of the Following Symptoms

- Rapid swelling at site of biopsy
- Bleeding at site of biopsy
- Redness, warmth at site of biopsy
- Fever (101 °F/ 38.5 °C or above), chills
- If you have any symptoms or concerns not covered by these instructions, call your doctor

When Can I Expect to Receive My Results?

A written report of your biopsy results will be faxed and mailed to your doctor's office, normally within two (2) to three (3) business days of your procedure. Sometimes, further studies are performed on the sample, which may take a few more days.

More Ways to Learn

Go to www.cpmc.org/learning.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is a fine-needle aspiration biopsy?

Answer: Fine-needle aspiration biopsy is a rapid and reliable (though not perfect) method of sampling of a lump. You or your doctor has felt a lump, and it is important to determine the nature of this lump. The most common possibilities are scars, cysts, infections, inflammation, and tumors.

Question: Can I drive myself home after a fine-needle aspiration biopsy?

Answer: Yes, you may drive yourself home after this procedure.

Question: Is this procedure painful?

Answer: You may experience mild discomfort similar to having your blood drawn.

Question: When will I receive the results?

Answer: Usually, a written report of your biopsy results will be faxed and mailed to your doctor's office within two (2) to three (3) business days of your procedure. Sometimes, further studies are performed on a sample, which may take a few more days.

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).