



Patient & Family Guide

2023

# Image-guided Core Biopsy of the Breast



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# Image-guided Core Biopsy of the Breast

## What is an image-guided core biopsy of the breast?

- During an image-guided core biopsy of the breast, a radiologist (a doctor who specializes in reading medical images like X-rays and ultrasounds) uses a needle to take small tissue samples from your breast.
- The needle may be guided by:
  - › a needle guide on the mammogram (X-ray of the breasts) machine, which is controlled by a computer.
  - › an ultrasound machine.
- After your core biopsy of the breast, the tissue samples are sent to the lab to be examined.

## Why do I need a core biopsy of the breast?

- This test is done when a radiologist finds an abnormal (problem) area on your mammogram or ultrasound.
- This test is done to find out if the abnormal area is benign (no cancer) or malignant (cancer).

## How do I get ready for this test?

- You may eat your meals as usual.
- Wear a comfortable bra with firm support.
- You may bring a support person. They can wait for you in the waiting room during your test.
- After the test, you may return to work if you wish.

## How is the test done?

- A member of your health care team will go over the test with you. They will answer any questions you may have.
- You will get a consent form to review and sign. **IMPORTANT: Before you sign the consent form, tell a member of your health care team if:**
  - › You are allergic to local anesthetic (freezing) or X-ray dye.
  - › You have any other health concerns.
- You should plan to be at the appointment for about 1 hour. The test will take about half an hour (30 minutes).

- **If a mammogram machine is being used:**
  - › Your breast will be placed in a special device that compresses (squeezes) it.
  - › The radiologist will take several X-rays.
  - › A computer will be programmed to move the needle into the correct place.
- **If an ultrasound machine is being used:**
  - › You will be asked to lie down.
  - › The radiologist will watch the needle on the screen.
- The radiologist will inject medication to freeze the biopsy area. Then they will use a needle to take tissue samples.
- Once they have taken enough tissue samples, they may mark the biopsy area. This mark will help guide the surgeon if you need a procedure later to remove the area.
  - › Marking is done by inserting (putting in) a small amount of X-ray dye and carbon particles, or a metal clip.
  - › If carbon is used, you may have small black dots at the puncture site (where the needle was inserted [put in]).
- If the biopsy area is marked, the radiologist may take more X-rays to confirm the position of the mark.

- After your core biopsy of the breast, your health care team will apply pressure and an ice pack to the incision (cut) site. This will help to stop any bleeding and lower any swelling or bruising.

## What will happen after my core biopsy of the breast?

### Controlling pain and/or discomfort

- After your biopsy, you may have pain and/or discomfort and bruising. This may be worse at the puncture site. This is normal.
- It may help to wear a bra with firm support, even when sleeping.
- If you see bleeding under the bandage, apply pressure and an ice pack to the area. **Do not** apply ice directly to your skin.
  - › If the bleeding continues, or if you have signs of infection (see below), call your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner), or call 811.

### **Signs of an infection or that the puncture site is not healing well:**

- › Redness, heat, swelling, or pain at the puncture site
- › Yellow or green pus that smells bad
- › Fever (temperature over 38<sup>0</sup> C/100.4<sup>0</sup> F) or chills

- Leave the bandage on for 3 days. If the bandage gets wet or comes off before this:
  - › Put antibiotic ointment (like Polysporin®) on the puncture site.
  - › Then put on a clean, dry bandage.

## **Activity**

**Do not** do strenuous (hard) activities (like tennis, lifting weights, or running) for 24 hours (1 day) after your biopsy.

## **Black dots at the puncture site**

- You may have small black dots on your skin at the puncture site. This is normal. They are caused by the carbon used during the biopsy.
- You will likely have these black dots for the rest of your life. This carbon is safe and will not hurt you.

## **When will I get my results?**

- The results will be sent to your primary health care provider in 7 to 10 business days.
- Your primary health care provider will call you to go over the results.
- Sometimes, your primary health care provider may need more information. If this happens, they may ask you to have another biopsy. They will talk with you about this.

- If you do not have a primary health care provider, ask a member of your health care team how to get your results.

**If your core biopsy of the breast result is benign (no signs of cancer):**

- We recommend that you return in 6 months for a follow-up mammogram of the affected breast.
- Your follow-up appointment will be booked by the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program (NSBSP). They will send the appointment to your primary health care provider's office.
- Your primary health care provider will tell you when your appointment is.
- If you do not have a primary health care provider, you will get an appointment reminder in the mail.

**If your core biopsy of the breast result is not normal:**

- If your results are **not normal**, or if **there are signs of cancer**, your primary health care provider will refer you to a breast surgeon.
- The breast surgeon will talk with you about treatment options.

If you have any questions, please call  
your primary health care provider or the  
Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program  
(NSBSP) Patient Navigator:

› Phone: 902-425-2410

#### Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.