

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Breast ultrasound examination

Your consultant has arranged for you to have a breast ultrasound examination. This leaflet will help you understand what this involves.

What is a breast ultrasound examination?

An ultrasound scan uses high-frequency sound waves to produce an image of the breast tissue. You will be asked to undress to the waist and lie on the couch with your arm above your head. Some water-soluble lubricating gel will be spread over the area of your breast. While moving the hand-held probe the clinician will be able to look clearly at the underlying breast tissue.

Is it painful and how long will it take?

The ultrasound scan should not be painful and, while the length of time varies, it can generally be done in a few minutes.

Can I have someone with me?

Yes, you may bring someone to accompany you during the scan if you wish.

What happens if the clinician finds something?

If a lump or area of concern is found during the ultrasound scan, a small sample containing breast tissue may be taken from the breast to help make a diagnosis. This is known as a core biopsy.

If a breast cyst is suspected, drainage of the area may be performed to confirm the presence of a cyst.

If you are taking any anticoagulants (blood thinning tablets) you should let the doctor know before having the core biopsy procedure.

Having a core biopsy does not necessarily mean that you have a serious breast condition.

Core biopsy under ultrasound - guidance

A core biopsy uses a needle to obtain a sample of breast tissue from the area of concern.

After local anaesthetic is given to numb the area, a small cut is made to the skin so that small samples of tissue can be taken. The clinician may take several samples. The tissue is sent to the laboratory, where it is examined under a microscope to establish a diagnosis.

When the core biopsy has been performed, you will usually have a small dressing applied and be asked to keep this on for a day or so afterwards.

Sometimes very thin strips of adhesive tape are used to help the edges of the wound to close.

Once the local anaesthetic wears off you may find your breast aches and it may become bruised. You can take pain relief medication if the area is tender or painful. You should contact your GP or Clinic 14 (Breast Clinic) if you experience swelling, bleeding, or inflammation in the breast.

Your results appointment will be arranged before you leave the clinic.

Cyst drainage under ultrasound - guidance

If the clinician diagnoses a cyst within the breast, they may advise that the cyst needs to be drained (aspirated). This can be uncomfortable but rarely requires local anaesthetic. Cysts are harmless and may disappear on their own.

The doctor will use the ultrasound to guide a small needle into the cyst, and the fluid is then drained away. The cystic fluid is usually discarded. You may be asked to wear a plaster for a few hours over the area where the needle has been. If a cyst has been diagnosed then you will usually be discharged afterwards.

Contact details

Breast Care
Clinic 14
Tel: 01623 622515, extension 3513

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or advice.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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