



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Vacuum Assisted Excision of Breast Lesion

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**Breast Imaging Unit**

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## **What is a vacuum assisted excision biopsy?**

Image guided vacuum assisted excision biopsy is a non-surgical procedure that can be used to remove abnormal tissue in the breast via a needle.

## **Why have I been offered this procedure?**

Some breast lesions, although considered benign are occasionally associated with malignant changes. In this case, it is necessary to remove more tissue to make sure they are definitely benign. This would previously have required a hospital admission, general anaesthetic and an incision in the breast.

However, where suitable, we now offer vacuum assisted excision biopsy. This is a minimally invasive procedure that does not require a hospital stay, general anaesthetic or open surgery and has been found to be a safe alternative.

## **What happens?**

We will use either ultrasound or x-ray to guide the needle to the correct area. We will inject a local anaesthetic into the skin of your breast at the site of the area to be removed. This will numb the area. A small cut about 5mm wide is made into the skin. A needle attached to a suction device is then inserted into the breast through this cut.

Small amounts of breast tissue are extracted through the needle until the area is removed.

The tissue will all be taken through the single cut in the skin unless we have told you that you will need a second procedure.

The practitioner performing the procedure will ask your consent to leave a tiny, metallic clip at the site of the tissue removal. The clip is used to identify the area if surgery is required at a later date. The clip is made of titanium and is safe to be left in the breast permanently if surgery is not required.

At the end of this procedure the needle is removed, and pressure applied to the area for around 15 minutes to ensure the bleeding has stopped.

Following this procedure an x-ray will be performed to confirm the new clip is in a good position and the correct area has been taken.

## **What are the benefits?**

In carefully selected patients the benefits of vacuum excision over open surgery are:

- No admission to hospital.
- No general anaesthetic.
- Smaller incision reducing any residual scarring.
- Reduced recovery time.

## **What are the risks?**

- Bruising (haematoma) happens in up to 13 out of 100 women.
- Mild pain after the procedure.
- Bleeding – can occur during the procedure. This happens in two to four out of 100 women.
- Scarring – you may have a small scar where the cut was made.

Less common risks of the procedure include:

- Fainting. We will observe you for a period after the procedure to ensure you are fit to go home.
- Wound infection. The procedure is a sterile procedure, so this risk is minimal.

X-rays use a small dose of radiation, which very slightly increases lifetime cancer risk. However, NHS machines use low doses, and the benefits outweigh the risks.

## **What are the risks of not having the procedure?**

This procedure is usually only performed on benign lesions and so there may be no risk to leaving the area alone. However, once the tissue is removed it is sent to the laboratory for further analysis. This may show why the lesion formed in the first instance or may show a cancer that was not detected at the initial biopsy.

## **Are there any alternative treatments?**

If you are uncertain about whether to have a vacuum excision, then you can discuss your surgical options with your breast team.

If you chose to have no treatment, we recommend that you check your breast regularly for any changes.

## **How do I prepare for the procedure?**

Unless you are asked specifically to discontinue certain medications or attend for a blood test, there is no preparation required before an excision.

## **Advice if you are taking blood thinning medication?**

Blood-thinning tablets such as warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban or rivaroxaban can lead to extra bleeding and bruising during the breast biopsy.

**If you take blood thinning drugs, please contact the Breast Imaging Unit on 01904 725592.**

# What happens after the procedure?

- The assistant supporting you through the procedure will press on the area to stop any bleeding and reduce bruise formation.
- A paper stitch and dressing will be placed over the incision. This should be kept in place for 24 hours.
- You will stay in the department for approximately one hour to ensure that the bleeding has stopped and that you feel well enough to go home.
- You will be advised to keep the breast supported by wearing a bra.
- We ask you try and keep the area dry for 48 hours.
- The local anaesthetic will wear off after approximately one hour. If there is any pain after the procedure, we advise you to take paracetamol. You are discouraged from taking medicines containing ibuprofen or aspirin as these have been shown to increase bruising and swelling.
- After the excision, before you leave the department, you will be given an after care sheet.

## **Going home**

We recommend that you do not drive home after this procedure so please arrange for alternative transport or for someone to take you home.

We advise avoiding strenuous activity for the first 24 hours, but you may resume normal activities after the procedure.

Do not worry if you develop bruising around the area of the excision or feel a lump in this area over the next few days, this is quite normal and will go down on its own. If you experience continued bleeding or have any concerns, please refer to your after care sheet.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:  
The Breast Imaging Unit, Magnolia Centre, York Hospital  
YO31 8HE or telephone: 01904 725590.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.



# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:  
[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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