

FNA biopsy–frequently asked questions

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What is Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) biopsy?

FNA is the simplest way of determining the nature of any lump that you or your doctor can feel. By inserting a fine needle through the skin and into the lump a tiny sample of tissue is obtained. This sample is then spread on a glass slide, stained with a series of dyes in the laboratory, and later examined under a microscope by the pathologist for diagnosis.

What is the purpose of the FNA?

FNA is the best way of helping your doctor decide what treatment, if any, is required for your lump. Although X-rays, scans and blood tests can be helpful, these usually are not sufficient to determine what treatment is needed.

Is the FNA painful?

The needle used is smaller than that used for a blood test so should not be any more painful than a blood test or injection. Local anaesthetic is not required and would generally be more painful than the FNA itself and it can interfere with the reliability of the test.

How long will the FNA take?

The entire consultation takes approximately 15 minutes. Actual sampling of the lump only takes a few seconds.

Is any preparation required?

No. You do not need to fast or change any medication you are taking. This includes blood thinning medication as the needle is so fine bleeding is rare. After the procedure is complete you can immediately resume normal activities, including driving.

When are the test results available?

The results usually take 1 to 2 working days and will be sent directly to your doctor.

Is the FNA reliable?

Highly accurate results are obtained. However, with a benign result you should continue in your doctor's care so that both of you can continue to check your lump.

Could I have cancer?

While it is not unusual for you to worry that your lump is malignant, most lumps prove to be benign.

Will I get a bruise?

Just as you may develop a bruise after having an injection or blood taken, you may get bruising or tenderness after FNA biopsy. If necessary an ice pack or mild non-aspirin medication (such as Paracetamol) should relieve any discomfort.

Do you have any questions?

If you have any further questions or concerns about the FNA biopsy, please don't hesitate to call your own doctor or speak to the pathologist who will be performing the FNA.