

# Percutaneous Lymph Node Biopsy (Ultrasound)

## Introduction

This leaflet tells you about the procedure known as percutaneous lymph node biopsy. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

Whether you are having the percutaneous biopsy as a planned or an emergency procedure, you should have sufficient explanation before you sign the consent form.

Radiologists are doctors specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex examinations. They are supported by radiographers who are highly trained to carry out X-rays and other imaging procedures.

## What is a percutaneous lymph node biopsy?

A needle biopsy is a way of taking a small piece of tissue out of your body, using only a tiny incision, so that it can be examined under a microscope by a pathologist, an expert in making diagnoses from tissue samples. It is called a percutaneous biopsy because this biopsy is carried out through the skin.

## Why do I need a percutaneous biopsy?

Other tests that you probably have had performed, such as an ultrasound scan or a CT scan, will have shown that there is an area of abnormal lymph node tissue inside your body. From the scan, it is not always possible to say

exactly what the abnormality is due to, and the simplest way of finding out is by taking a tiny piece of it away for a pathologist to examine.

## Who has made the decision?

The consultant in charge of your case, and the radiologist performing the biopsy will have discussed the situation, and feel that this is the best thing to do. However, you will also have the opportunity for your opinion to be considered, and if, after discussion with your doctors, you do not want the procedure carried out, you can decide against it.

## What are the options or alternatives?

This is the simplest way to obtain tissue and make a diagnosis. The alternative would require an open operation.

## Who will be performing the percutaneous biopsy?

A specially trained doctor called a radiologist. Radiologists have special expertise in using x-ray and scanning equipment, and also in interpreting the images produced. They need to look at these images while carrying out the biopsy.

Radiographers and radiology nurses will be present in the room to assist during the procedure, they will introduce themselves at the start.

Occasionally student radiographers or medical students will be present to observe the procedure.

## Where will the biopsy take place?

Generally in ultrasound of the Medical Imaging Department.

## How do I prepare for percutaneous biopsy?

- You do not need any special preparation. You may be asked to change into a gown. You may be asked to stay in the department for a short period of time for observation.
- You will have had some blood tests performed before the procedure to check that you do not have an increased risk of bleeding.
- You will need someone to drive you home and to look after you for 24 hours.
- You should be prepared to stay overnight if necessary.
- If you have any allergies or you have previously reacted to intravenous contrast medium, you must let the doctor know. Intravenous contrast medium is the injection we give you during some scans.
- If you are diabetic, please contact the Medical Imaging Department on **01392 402336 selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries, option 8 for radiology nurses.**
- If you normally take any medication to thin your blood (anticoagulation or antiplatelet drugs) such as: **warfarin / clopidogrel / aspirin / non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS / brufen / ibrufen / nurofen) / dabigatran (Pradaxa) / rivaroxiban (Xarelto) / Apixaban (Eliquis) / phendione / acenocoumarol** – then these may need to be stopped or altered. Please seek the advice of your hospital consultant or nurse specialist as soon as possible, ask your GP, or contact the Medical Imaging Department on **01392 402336 selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.**

## What actually happens during a percutaneous biopsy?

You will lie on the ultrasound table, in the position that the radiologist has decided is most suitable.

The radiologist will keep everything as sterile as possible. Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic, and you may have some of your body covered with a theatre towel. The radiologist will use the ultrasound machine to decide on the most suitable point for inserting the biopsy needle. Your skin will be then anaesthetised, and the biopsy needle inserted into the abnormal tissue.

While the first part of the procedure may seem to take a while, actually performing the biopsy does not take very long at all, and the needle may be in and out so quickly that you barely notice it.

## Will it hurt?

Most biopsies do not hurt at all. When the local anaesthetic is injected, it will sting to start with, but this soon passes off, and the skin and deeper tissues should then feel numb. Later, you may be aware of the needle passing into your body, but this is generally done so quickly, that it does not cause any discomfort at all.

There will be a nurse, or another member of clinical staff, standing next to you and looking after you. If the procedure does become painful for you, then they will be able to arrange for you to have more painkillers through the needle in your arm.

## How long will it take?

Every patient's situation is different, and it is not always easy to predict how complex or how straightforward the procedure will be. It may be over in 30 minutes, although you may be in the Medical Imaging Department for about an hour altogether.

## What happens afterwards?

You will usually be asked to remain in the nursing recovery area for a short period of observation.

## What will happen to the results?

A report of the procedure will be recorded on your electronic patient record immediately for review by your specialist.

Do not expect to get the result of the biopsy before you leave, as it always takes a few days for the pathologist to do all the necessary tests on the biopsy specimen.

## Are there any risks or complications?

Percutaneous biopsy is a very safe procedure, but there are a few risks or complications that can arise, as with any medical treatment.

There is a small risk of bleeding and bruising but this is rare.

Biopsy technique may vary slightly depending on your anatomy as well as other factors. Any possible additional risks or potential complications will be explained to you by the radiologist on the day

Unfortunately, not all biopsies are successful. This may be because, despite taking every possible care, the piece of tissue which has actually been obtained is normal tissue rather than abnormal. Alternatively, although abnormal tissue has been obtained, it may not be enough for the pathologist to make a definite diagnosis. The radiologist performing your biopsy may be able to give you some idea as to the chance of obtaining a satisfactory sample.

Despite these possible complications, percutaneous biopsy is normally very safe, and is designed to save you from having a bigger procedure.

## Finally....

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.

## Contact us

If you found reading your leaflet difficult, you do not understand what it means for you, if you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on: **01392 402336** and we can talk it through.

## How to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford

Please refer to the enclosed "Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department" leaflet and use the Trusts website for the latest information:

**[www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/our-sites](http://www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/our-sites)**

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:

**[www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray](http://www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray)**

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