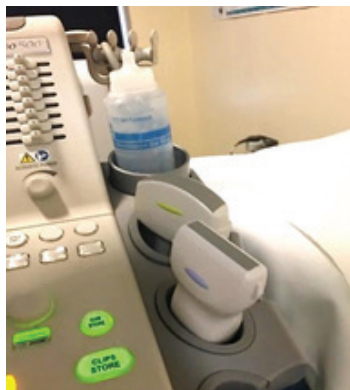


What is an ultrasound guided biopsy of the neck?

A neck biopsy is a procedure performed by a radiologist (a specially trained doctor) to take a tissue sample of an abnormality in the neck. This can be carried out anywhere in the neck, for example the lymph nodes (glands) or thyroid. The biopsy is performed using an ultrasound scanner and special biopsy needle.

Ultrasound scanners are small devices that emit high frequency ultrasound waves from a small hand-held probe that reflect off the imaged body part and forms a real-time image on a screen. The radiologist moves the probe around to locate the lump and help them obtain a biopsy from the correct place.



Why do I need an ultrasound guided biopsy of the neck?

The results of the examinations by your GP/ Consultant, or the results of other tests that you have had - such as blood tests or imaging tests - show that you may have an abnormality in your neck. A biopsy will help to determine the nature of the abnormality and guide your doctors in any treatment you may require.

What does an ultrasound-guided biopsy of the neck involve?

An ultrasound-guided biopsy is a far less invasive alternative to having a surgical procedure to getting a sample of the lump.

It is performed in a scan room containing the ultrasound machine. You will be asked to lie down on a couch. The radiologist will discuss the steps with you and scan your neck to decide if a biopsy is necessary and possible. A gel is applied to the skin and a small probe is moved over the neck.

Once the lump is seen on the screen, the skin will be cleaned and some local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin using a small needle and syringe to make it numb before the biopsy is carried out. If you are having a fine needle aspiration (FNA), a very thin needle is used to take some cells from the lump. A core biopsy involves a slightly bigger needle to obtain a tissue sample.

The radiologist will determine on the day which procedure is more appropriate. Once the sample is obtained, pressure is applied on the area to minimise bleeding and then a small plaster is applied to the biopsy site. You will not require stitches. The biopsy sample is sent to the laboratory for examination under a microscope by a histopathologist.

The whole procedure generally takes around 30 minutes. However, do allow up to an hour for your time in the department.

What are the risks?

Ultrasound guided biopsy of the neck are considered a safe procedure. Occasionally, you may develop a small bruise or in rare instances, develop a larger collection of blood under your skin (haematoma).

The other risk of invasive procedures is infection. This is minimised by the use of sterile equipment and a sterile cover over the ultrasound probe. The radiologist will discuss the specific risks with you on the day and ask for your consent before performing the procedure.

What should I do to prepare for the procedure? Unless we have told you otherwise, continue to take your regular medication as usual. Please ensure you let the department know if you are on any medications that thin your blood, such as Clopidogrel, Warfarin, Apixaban, Dabigatran, Rivaroxaban, or Enoxaparin, because these may need to be stopped for a few days prior to the procedure - the department will advise on that before your appointment.

You do not need to fast for this procedure. You can eat and drink as normal.

It is helpful to wear loose clothing without a high collar or polo neck. Please remove your necklace before the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?

We will ask you to stay in the department after around 20-30 minutes after the biopsy to ensure you are ok after the procedure. It may be slightly longer if you have experienced any complications during the procedure. You can eat and drink as normal.

We generally advise you to avoid any vigorous physical activity for 24 hours after the procedure. If you have had a core biopsy, it is advisable to keep the biopsy site dry with the plaster on for 24 hours.

Most people feel comfortable to go back to work the same day or the following day. If you develop any bleeding at the biopsy site after you have left the department, you should apply pressure for at least 5 minutes until the bleeding stops.

If you develop redness and swelling at the biopsy site, we advise you to contact your GP or consultant as you may need antibiotics.

When do I get the results?

The results of your neck biopsy will usually be available in 1-2 weeks and your doctor will see you in clinic to inform you of the results. If you do not have a follow up appointment arranged, please contact your Consultant's secretary.

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or a different format.

Radiology Dept
Issue 1 – Ref: no. 0175
Approved by the Patient Information Group
Published November 2020 Review November 2023

Ultrasound guided biopsy of the neck

Information for patients

