

What to expect if you are going to have a biopsy in the office

If your surgeon determines that a breast biopsy is needed, we will inform you at the time of your office visit, or after appropriate imaging (ultrasound or mammogram) has been obtained. Sometimes changes may be found that are only visible by X-ray in which case you may need to go back for a mammogram (stereotactic) guided biopsy in the radiology department. Our office will help you coordinate this.

Sometimes the area may be visible only under ultrasound. In this case the biopsy can occur either in the radiology department or in our office using our ultrasound machine. Your surgeon will decide this. Some times there is an area that can be felt (palpated) and this can also be biopsied either in the office, or sometimes in the operating room. Again, your surgeon will explain what type of biopsy is best for you.

If you have a biopsy in the office we will work with you to schedule it, sometimes the same day or next day. When you come in for your biopsy please wear comfortable loose fitting clothing and bra that provides good support but preferably not a sports bra. Sometimes the cleaning solution can get on your clothes despite our best efforts so please don't wear your nicest clothing to your biopsy appointment! The procedure can take 20 to 40 minutes.

If possible, please don't bring young children as they are usually quite bored or scared by the procedure. Sometimes you may be given a medication to take before the procedure to reduce anxiety. If you do, you will need somebody to drive you to and from your appointment.

Core or needle biopsy

For a core or needle biopsy your breast will be cleaned (prepped) with a sterile solution and a small area anesthetized with numbing medicine (like at the dentist). Once the area is numb a small (1/4 inch) incision will be made in the skin to allow the biopsy device to be inserted.

Then using ultrasound or palpation for guidance the area of concern will be sampled. The device to take the tissue samples makes some noise but your surgeon will demonstrate it for you so you know what to expect. After an adequate sample of tissue has been taken the incision will be closed with Steri-strips (paper tapes) and a dressing applied.

Sometimes your surgeon will want to keep some pressure on the area in order to decrease the amount of bruising or prevent a hematoma (a big bruise/blood collection in the tissues). Sometimes your surgeon will want you to wear a bra for 24-48 hours to put gentle pressure on the area. Either way some bruising is to be expected and can take a few weeks to go completely away. The incision in the skin is usually so small it will be unnoticeable when it's healed.

Excisional or incisional biopsy

Sometimes your surgeon will want to perform a larger biopsy. In this case the procedure is similar to what is described above but may take a little longer and may have a bigger incision but usually less than an inch long unless the procedure is preformed in the operating room.

When you go home you can take Tylenol for pain. Your surgeon will let you know if they don't want you to take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) as it can increase bleeding. Your doctor may give you a prescription medicine to take as well. Leave the dressing on for 48 hours (or as instructed) and then you can remove it. You can shower but try not to get the area wet for 48 hours. The paper tapes will fall off on their own or we will remove them at your follow up appointment. Most women will have some bruising and some mild pain in their breast. Most are able to return to work the next day but try to limit heavy physical activity for a few days.

After your procedure the doctor will usually have you come back in a week for a recheck and to discuss the results of the biopsy. Feel free to bring a family member or friend to the biopsy appointment or to discuss the results if you think it would help you to have someone else present.