

Ultrasound guided fine needle aspiration (FNA)

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What is a fine needle aspiration (FNA)?

A fine needle aspiration (FNA) is a test that involves taking small samples of fluid and cells. The pathologist then examines these to help diagnose the problem.

PLEASE NOTE: Sometimes it is used to draw fluid from a cyst, in which case the fluid is not always tested. Your doctor should have discussed the procedure with you.

Why is it needed?

A scan has shown an area that needs further investigation or a cyst that needs to be aspirated. This test may help to make a diagnosis.

What does it involve?

You will usually have this done using an ultrasound scan. You will be asked to lie on a couch. Sound waves pass through the area being scanned and a computer picture is formed, and we will identify the area of concern. The exact area is marked.

The skin may be cleaned. A local anaesthetic may be injected into the area to numb the surrounding skin and tissues – this may sting very slightly.

A fine needle is inserted and either fluid or cells drawn off. This may cause discomfort but you should feel no pain. It is very important that you keep still for the procedure. When the needle is taken out we may apply a small dressing.

The test will take about 15 to 30 minutes altogether.

What preparations are needed?

Usually no preparation is needed.

If you are taking drugs to thin the blood such as warfarin, heparin or aspirin, or have a problem with your blood clotting, please telephone the radiology nurse for advice on 01271 311869, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

How will I feel afterwards?

You may feel some discomfort after the procedure. If so, you can take simple painkillers such as paracetamol that you normally would for a headache. Drugs like aspirin might cause bleeding, so are best avoided.

You may notice some bruising, but this normally settles on its own. If the area becomes red and tender, please contact your GP as you may have an infection. Most patients can return to normal daily activity straightaway.

Are there any risks?

Like any medical test, no test is 100% accurate and complications can occur. Serious bruising or infection is unusual but possible after the test. An inadequate sample is also possible.

Further information

If you have any queries or concerns about your biopsy, please contact the radiology nurses on 01271 311869, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

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Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net