

Department of radiology

# Ultrasound guided fine needle aspiration (FNA)

## Introduction

This leaflet tells you about the procedure known as fine needle aspiration (FNA). It explains what is involved and what the benefits and risks are.

## What is an ultrasound guided FNA?

An ultrasound guided FNA involves inserting a thin needle through the skin to allow a sample to be taken. Typically a small amount of fluid or a few cells are removed by the needle. These can then be analysed under the microscope to give your doctor more information.

## What to tell the doctor

- If you have any allergies.
- If you have had a previous reaction to intravenous contrast medium (the dye used for some X-rays and CT scanning).
- It is important to tell the doctor or the radiology department **before attending for admission** if you are taking medication to prevent blood clots. Below is a list of some of the medications which are used to thin the blood and help to prevent blood clots.
- If you are currently taking any of these medications, please contact your referring doctor or the radiology department on **0161 446 3325** as soon as possible, as these may need to be stopped prior to your procedure. Failure to do so may result in your procedure being postponed.

- Apixaban
- Aspirin
- Clexane
- Clopidogrel
- Dabigatran
- Dalteparin
- Enoxaparin
- Fragmin
- Rivaroxaban
- Warfarin

## Agreeing to treatment

We will ask you to sign a consent form agreeing to accept the treatment that you are being offered. The basis of the treatment is that you have had The Christie's written description of the proposed treatment and that you have been given an opportunity to discuss any concerns. You are entitled to request a second opinion from another doctor who specialises in treating this cancer. You can ask your own



consultant or your GP to refer you. Your consent may be withdrawn at any time before or during this treatment. Should you decide to withdraw your consent, then a member of your treating team will discuss the possible consequences with you.

### **Is there any preparation for my FNA?**

Very little preparation is needed for your FNA. You may eat and drink normally before the procedure. When you arrive for your FNA, we may ask you to wear a hospital gown. You are welcome to bring your own dressing gown to wear over this while you are waiting for your scan. Please do not leave any valuables in the changing cubicle.

### **What happens during my FNA?**

A member of the ultrasound staff will escort you into the scanning room and introduce you to the radiologist. He or she will explain the procedure to you and answer your questions. We will then ask you to sign a consent form.

You will be asked to lie on the scanning couch on your back and the radiologist will put some cold jelly on your skin. The radiologist will perform an initial scan and will run the ultrasound probe over your skin. This should not hurt. The images of your body are displayed as a picture on the monitor. The radiologist will be looking at the ultrasound machine while carrying out your scan.

Once the radiologist has identified the best area to take a small sample they will perform the FNA. A thin needle, like the one used to take a blood sample, is placed in the skin and gently guided into the area to be biopsied. We may also use a local anaesthetic to numb the area.

The needle will be moved slightly to collect a small sample of fluid and cells.

The needle is then removed and the sample is placed on to a slide or into a special sterile bottle for analysis.

A cytologist from the pathology laboratory may also be present in the room to check the sample that is taken.

It may be necessary to repeat the procedure once or twice more to ensure that we have an adequate sample for an accurate analysis.

During the FNA you might experience some stinging or a stabbing pain depending on the area where the biopsy is taken from, but this does not last.

There may be some bruising following the FNA and this may be uncomfortable for a day or two.

### **What happens after my FNA?**

We will ask you to dress and remain in the department for about 30 minutes. This is to make sure that you are all right and that there are no adverse effects from the FNA.

You will normally be able to leave immediately after this time if you are feeling well.

After your scan, the sample will be interpreted by a consultant who will then forward their findings to the doctor looking after you at The Christie. This normally takes about 1 week.

## **Is the test safe?**

- Generally, an FNA is a very safe procedure.
- Occasionally there may be some bleeding under the skin and a bruise or swelling may form.
- There is a small risk of the needle causing damage to adjacent structures but this is minimised by using the ultrasound machine to allow the radiologist to see and accurately place the needle into the area to be sampled.
- Occasionally the test may not provide adequate cells and may need to be repeated.

## **What is the benefit of an FNA test?**

This allows a sample to be taken for analysis under the microscope.- The sample is very important as it may identify a suspicious area. This can then provide your doctors with valuable information to help plan the most appropriate treatment for you.

## **Are there any alternatives to an FNA?**

There may be other tests which can be done instead of an FNA. However, it is likely that they may not be able to provide the specialist information that your doctors need to make a definite diagnosis of your condition, or they may be more invasive. You should discuss this with the doctors that are looking after you.

## **What happens if I decide not to have an FNA test?**

There may be some uncertainty about the cause of your swelling. Scans and blood tests may not give a clear answer. If you do nothing when there is doubt about the cause of your swelling, you may miss out on important treatment.

## **What happens if I can't keep my FNA appointment?**

If you can't keep your appointment, please contact the ultrasound department straight away to arrange an alternative date.

If you are admitted to hospital before your appointment, please tell the ward staff that you have an FNA appointment booked.

## If you have any problems or worries, please contact:

From 9:00am to 5:00pm      Radiology nurse on **0161 446 3325** or  
radiology department on **0161 446 3322**

Out of hours  
and for emergencies:      Ring The Christie on **0161 446 3000**  
and ask for the on-call radiologist

The Christie Hotline:      **0161 446 3658**

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **[the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net)**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week