

Image-Guided Breast Biopsy: Stereotactic, Ultrasound, or MRI

Why do I need a breast biopsy?

- A breast biopsy is recommended for a new or indeterminate finding seen with mammogram, ultrasound or MRI. Common indications for biopsy are calcifications, masses or other findings.
- The biopsy removes a small tissue sample that is examined under a microscope by a pathologist. The biopsy does not remove the entire finding; the sample is sufficient for diagnosis and in most cases spares further surgical procedures.
- Most biopsies yield benign (normal or not cancer) results since we look for the earliest possible sign of breast cancer. Having a biopsy does not increase your chance of breast cancer. Our team at Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital is efficient, caring and will take time to answer all your questions.

Is a breast biopsy safe?

- Yes, image-guided biopsies are generally very safe. The procedure involves a local anesthetic and usually no scar is expected.
- A small clip will be placed to mark the area biopsied. The clip is smaller than an eyelash and does not interfere with metal detectors. The clip is made of nickel or titanium metal; if you have a nickel metal allergy please let us know ahead of time.

What do I do before the biopsy?

- There are no restrictions. You may eat and drink normally. Some patients drive themselves back to work / home or make arrangements for transportation after the biopsy.
- Please let us know if you take Coumadin (warfarin) or any other blood thinner; if you take Coumadin (warfarin) we may need to check an INR value. Do not stop your blood thinner medication unless told to so by your physician.

What to expect the day of the biopsy?

1. The total procedure time is typically 1 hour from start to finish but the actual sampling is 15-20 minutes. Most time is positioning and setting up for a safe procedure. We will discuss the procedure, consent form, and ask you about any relevant allergies. Please let us know if you have any allergies to nickel, lidocaine, adhesive bandages, etc.
2. We will gently position you for the biopsy. If you have a stereotactic biopsy, you sit upright in a chair with your breast in compression within the mammogram machine. If you have an ultrasound biopsy, you lie on your back or side. If you have an MR biopsy, you are face-down on a unique platform supporting your breasts in compression.
3. After locating the area of biopsy, we will take time to numb your breast. Please let us know if you usually need more numbing medication during procedures. Also let us know if you feel any pain after initial numbing; more numbing medication can be given.
4. After numbing, the biopsy device is inserted into your breast to acquire the sample. You may hear some loud noises and it is important to stay still. A short pause may be taken to x-ray the tissue.
5. After sampling, a small clip will be placed to mark the spot biopsied. If a clip is placed, you will have a gentle mammogram to confirm the clip position after the procedure. At this point the biopsy is complete. Our team will take care to ensure any bleeding is stopped and provide our post-care instructions.



What can I take for pain?

- Some patients do not take any pain medication. Most pain associated with the biopsy can be relieved with over the counter medications such as Tylenol or Advil. An ice pack may help with pain and bruising.

What if the biopsy takes too long or doesn't work?

- In few cases, the biopsy result may be unexpected or not explain the imaging findings. This may require additional imaging, repeat biopsy or a surgical procedure. In few cases, we may not be able to perform the biopsy. If this happens, our team will be in communication with you.

When should I call my health care provider?

- Bruising at the biopsy site or throughout the breast is normal.
- Although the risk of infection is very low, please call us if you start to have a fever over 101° F, redness, warmth, or tenderness over the biopsy site.

How soon will I get the results?

- Pathology results are usually available after 3-5 business days. Due to the Cures Act in 2020, results are immediately released to Patient Gateway and physicians at the same time. Your radiologist will need additional time after the results are released to review your imaging and arrange next steps of follow-up care.
- Please allow 2 business days from the release of results for a member of your care team to call you with an explanation of results and complete follow-up plan. Some results are benign and you may return to routine screening. Other results will require additional referral or follow-up imaging.

Feelings caused by the biopsy recommendation

- We understand being scheduled to have a biopsy is usually accompanied by stress and anxiety.
- Sometimes family and friends don't know what to say to help. If you feel very upset, please let your clinician know and get the help you need.