

# Preparing for Your Stereotactic Core Biopsy

## For patients at the Rapid Diagnostic Centre

Gattuso Rapid Diagnostic Centre  
Princess Margaret Cancer Centre  
3rd floor, Breast Imaging  
610 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON, M5G 2M9

Phone: 416 946 2297

Website: [www.grdc.theprincessmargaret.ca](http://www.grdc.theprincessmargaret.ca)



## **About stereotactic biopsies**

### **What is a stereotactic core biopsy?**

A biopsy involves taking small samples of tissue from the breast. It is done to test an area of breast tissue without surgery.

A core biopsy is a type of biopsy. The doctors will use a special hollow needle called a core needle.

During a stereotactic core biopsy, a special mammography machine is used. It will help the radiologist find the area that needs to be sampled. The tissue samples are then sent to a pathology lab for testing.

### **Why do I need a biopsy?**

A biopsy is often needed when an abnormal finding is seen on your mammogram, breast ultrasound, or breast MRI.

Ask your doctor these questions:

- Why do I need a biopsy?
- How long will it take?
- Will it hurt?
- Can you describe the size of the cut?
- Can I drive home afterward, or will I need someone to drive me?
- Will my activities be limited? Can I lift things? Go back to work? Care for my children?
- When will my results be ready?
- Who will give me my results? Do I need to book an appointment?
- What will the biopsy results show? What are the next steps?

## Before your biopsy

### How can I prepare for my biopsy?

Do this **as early as possible**:

- Ask a family member or friend to take you home. You can also bring someone for support during your appointment.

Tell the doctor who referred you if are:

- Taking a blood thinner. This includes medicine like Warfarin (also called Coumadin) and Heparin. These medicines may increase your chance of bleeding and bruising.
  - If you are taking Warfarin, the radiologist will need a copy of your latest International Normalized Ratio (INR) blood test. This will show them whether it is safe to do a biopsy.
  - If you are taking Heparin, you may need to stop taking it for a short time.
- Taking an anti-inflammatory medicine. This includes Aspirin (ASA or acetylsalicylic acid) or Advil (ibuprofen).
- Allergic to a medicine called Xylocaine or Lidocaine. This medicine is used to numb the biopsy area.

If you are not sure what type of medicines you are taking, review your medicines with the doctor who referred you.

Do this **the night before** your biopsy:

- Take a shower. The biopsy site will need to be dry for 24 hours after your biopsy. You will not be able to take a shower for a day.

Do this on **the morning** of your biopsy:

- Take your regular medicines.
- Do not use deodorant or scented products around your underarm and breast area. They may affect how clear the images will be.
- Eat and drink normally.
- Wear comfortable clothes. Wear a 2-piece outfit that will be easy to take off and put on.

### **What should I bring to the appointment?**

- Your Ontario health card (OHIP).
- A family member or friend who can take you home.

### **During your biopsy**

#### **Who will do my biopsy?**

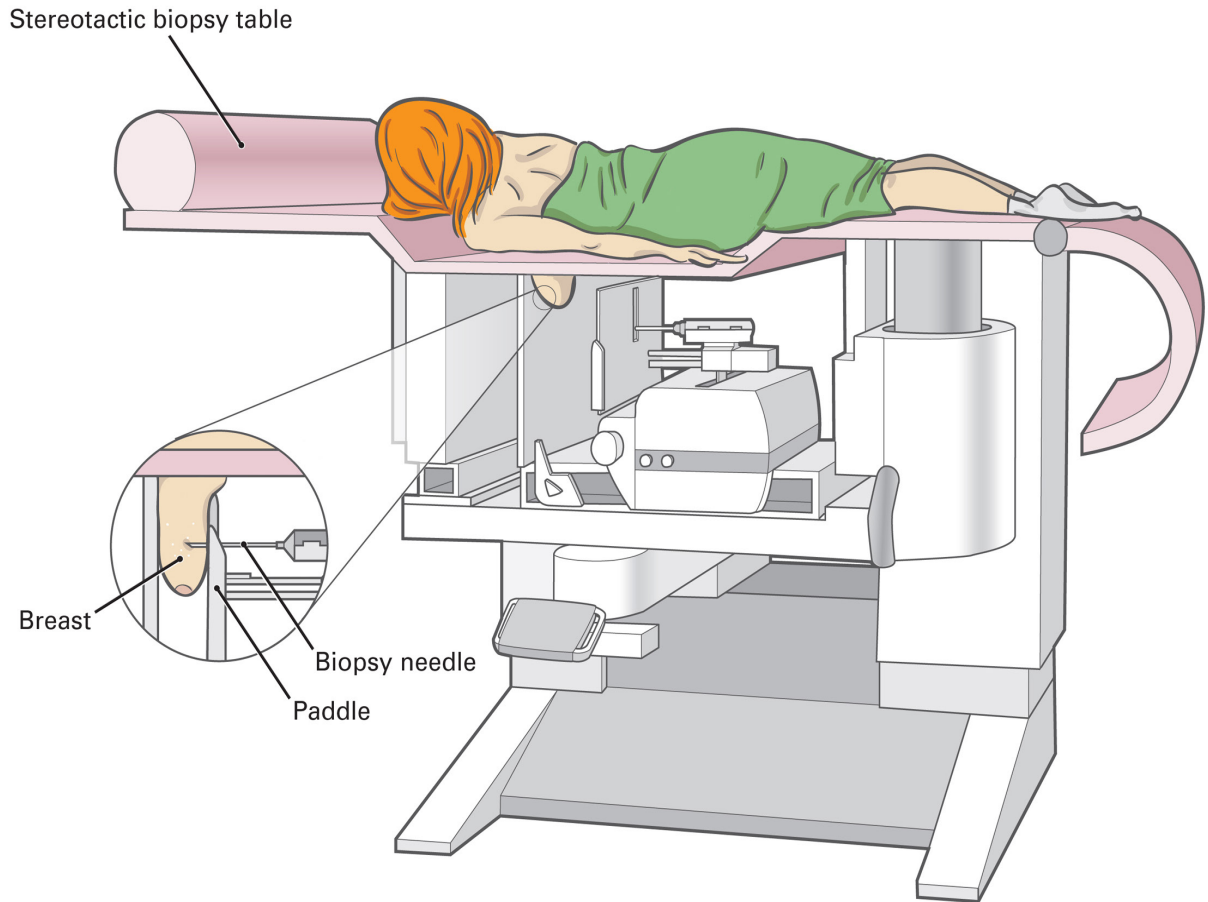
A breast radiologist and technologist will perform the biopsy. A breast radiologist is a doctor who is specialized in breast imaging.

#### **What happens during a biopsy?**

1. The radiologist and technologist will review your mammogram, breast ultrasound, and/or breast MRI images. This will help them decide the best way to do your biopsy.
2. You will lie face down. Your breast(s) will be positioned into openings in the table. The table will be raised. This will allow the radiologist to do the biopsy from under the table.
3. Your breast will be slightly compressed by a special paddle. The paddle has a small opening in the middle.

4. The radiologist will take some x-ray pictures of the breast. It will show the radiologist where to take the sample.
5. You will get a needle shot with some medicine to numb your skin. The needle may sting briefly. After this you should have very little or no discomfort. If you feel pain at any time during the biopsy, let the radiologist know. They may give you more numbing medicine.
6. A small cut will be made on your skin.
7. The biopsy needle will be inserted through the cut several times. Each time the needle goes in, it will take a small sample. You may feel some pressure when the biopsy needle is inserted.
8. Depending where you need the biopsy, the radiologist may use different needle sizes. This includes a vacuum-assisted method. The machine uses some pressure to pull a small amount of tissue from the breast through the needle.
9. A small clip will be placed into the biopsy site. This clip will show up on all your future mammograms, ultrasounds and MRI's. It will make the area easier to find in the future. The clip is made of titanium or stainless steel. It will not activate at airport security checks.
10. After the biopsy is done, your breast will be bandaged tightly. A cold ice pack will also be applied to your breast.
11. The tissue samples will be sent to the Pathology Lab. A pathologist will look at the samples. A pathologist is a doctor who specializes in diagnosing disease in tissue.

Be relaxed, breathe normally and stay still for the entire test.



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### **How long does the biopsy take?**

The entire appointment takes about 60 minutes. But, it only takes 20 minutes to take the tissue samples. You will be in the Breast Imaging Department for about 1 to 2 hours.

## After your biopsy

### How can I take care of myself after the biopsy?

The technologist will teach you how to care for yourself after the biopsy. You may have some bruising or tenderness in your breast for a few days.

Do this to care for your biopsy site:

- Wear a bra for support.
- Keep the area dry for 24 hours.
- Do not do anything to strain yourself for 1 to 2 days after your biopsy. Thing includes sports or lifting heaving things.

Do this if you have pain and swelling:

- If you need to take something for discomfort, take Tylenol (acetaminophen). **Do not take Aspirin (ASA or acetylsalicylic acid) or Advil (ibuprofen)** as they may cause more bruising.
- To help reduce swelling, apply an ice pack wrapped with a clean cloth to the biopsy site. Do this for 20 minutes. Repeat every hour as needed until bedtime.

Do this to care for your dressing:

- If your skin is irritated, you can remove the top dressing a few hours after the biopsy.
- **Do not remove the steri-strips below the top dressing.** The Steri-Strips will peel off on their own. This usually happens after 5 to 7 days. If the Steri-Strips do not fall off after 7 days, you can remove them.



### **Call your family doctor if you notice any of these signs:**

- fever higher than 38 °C (100 °F)
- a lot of bleeding
- redness
- swelling that is getting bigger
- pus

If you cannot reach your family doctor, go to nearest hospital Emergency Department.

If you are treated for any of the above symptoms, please call the Breast Imaging Department to let them know.

### **When will my results be ready?**

Your nurse practitioner will let you know after the testing appointment.

They will give you an appointment card with the time and place for your 2nd appointment to talk about the test results. This appointment may be on the day of testing or it may be a few days later.

### **What will my results show?**

The results of your biopsy will show if the breast changes you have are benign (not cancer) or cancer. This will help you and your healthcare team plan what care you may need.



## **How can I deal with stress during this time?**

Getting tested for breast changes can be stressful. It is normal to have feelings of anxiety and distress.

These feelings can change over time. It may not be the same while you are waiting to receive testing. It may change during testing. It may also change while you are waiting for your results. Each person's experience is different. There is no right or wrong way to feel about this. This experience may mean different things to different people.

Think about what has helped you get through stressful and uncertain times in the past.

Try these tips to see if they offer you some relief:

- ✓ Talk to a supportive partner, family member or friend.
- ✓ Do an activity to help keep your mind busy. Try something you enjoy. Focusing on something other than the tests and results may help. This can include reading, listening to music, going to a movie, seeking spiritual guidance or going for a walk.
- ✓ Read trusted health information. This may help if you prefer to be informed before testing and while you wait for your results. The Princess Margaret Patient and Family Library has a many resources for patients and families. Find out more about the Library below.

If you would like to speak to someone about your concerns or feelings, please let your health care team know.

## Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, go to:

- Patient and Family Library  
Main atrium, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre  
Phone: 416 946 4501 extension 5383  
Website: [www.library.theprincessmargaret.ca](http://www.library.theprincessmargaret.ca)

The Patient and Family Library offers trusted information about:

- cancer
- cancer treatment and care
- support organizations and services
- much more

Here you will find computer stations, books, brochures, DVDs, audio books, electronic books and CDs. Trained staff and volunteers can help with your questions and help you to find the information and resources you need.



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