

Needle core biopsy: Vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided

This document includes information about a type of needle core biopsy that is guided by a mammogram-machine and involves vacuum suction. It is also known as vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided core biopsy or stereotactic vacuum-assisted core biopsy (stereotactic VACB).

What is a vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy?

A needle core biopsy is a test which removes a small sample of breast tissue for examination under a microscope. It is a safe and simple procedure.

In a vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy, we use a mammogram machine with computer technology to guide the biopsy needle into the correct position. A doctor will perform the biopsy with a special needle and apply suction to take the sample from the breast. This type of biopsy removes a slightly larger sample than other types; however, the recovery process is the same.

We may perform a vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy when an abnormal area of the breast can be seen on a mammogram but cannot be felt by the doctor or found with ultrasound.

What are the limitations of vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy?

A vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy may not provide a definite diagnosis. You may need more tests to confirm or exclude breast cancer.

What will happen before my biopsy?

Before your biopsy we will ask if you:

- Have any allergies
- Have had a reaction to local anaesthetic in the past
- Are currently taking any blood-thinning medications or medications that make you bleed or bruise easily

What will happen during my biopsy?

A vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes. A nurse counsellor will stay with you for the entire test.

1. We will explain the biopsy process before we begin to make sure you understand what is involved. Please let us know if you have any concerns.
2. We will then ask you to either lie face down on a special table, lie on your side or sit upright in a chair.
3. Positioning is essential for a vacuum-assisted, mammogram-guided biopsy. It may take time to locate the area of concern. The doctor and radiographer will talk during this process; this is an important part of the planning stage.
4. We will compress your breast using a mammogram machine to hold it in place throughout the test. This compression will be less firm than a standard breast screen. It is important to keep as still as possible.
5. With your breast in position, we will take some x-ray images to find the area that needs to be tested.
6. We will clean the skin of your breast using an antiseptic, before injecting local anaesthetic to numb the area.
7. When the area is numb, we will make a tiny cut in the skin and the doctor will insert the biopsy needle into the breast. You will hear a loud click from the biopsy instrument as we take the first sample. When we take further samples, you will hear a whirring noise as we apply vacuum suction.

8. The doctor may place a tiny metal clip (about 2mm long) into the area of the breast where they have taken the samples. The clip will help us to locate the area again in future. It is typically made of stainless steel or titanium and will not cause any side effects. If you do not need further treatment, the clip can be safely left in your breast – including if you need an MRI or CT scan in the future.
9. We may take further x-ray images of your breast.
10. We will send the samples to a pathologist for examination under a microscope.

Vacuum-assisted, ultrasound-guided biopsy

A vacuum-assisted biopsy may also be performed with the guidance of ultrasound. This will not require us to compress your breast or take x-ray images. Instead, we will use ultrasound to find the area of the breast that requires examination and a doctor will guide the biopsy needle into the correct position, before applying suction to take the sample from the breast. We will send the samples to a pathologist for examination under a microscope.

What are the possible side effects of biopsies?

Possible side effects of biopsies include:

Bruising and bleeding: Bruising is a very common side effect of biopsies. It should disappear in a few days. In rare cases, you may develop a large, deep bruise (haematoma), which is felt as a lump in the breast. This will not require special treatment but can take longer to disappear. You may have some minor bleeding from the cut. This usually stops with compression.

Pain: Everyone has a different pain tolerance. If you experience pain during your biopsy, please tell your doctor. They will stop the test and discuss options with you.

Fainting: If you have a history of fainting during medical tests, you should tell the doctor before they begin the biopsy.

Infection: Infection in the breast after a biopsy is very rare.

Reaction to local anaesthetic: Allergic reactions to local anaesthetic used for a biopsy are extremely rare.

What will happen after my biopsy?

When the biopsy is complete, we will apply pressure to the breast to help stop any bruising. You will not require any stitches. We will put Steri-Strips and a waterproof dressing on the incision. We will also give you an ice pack. You may need to

wait up to 30 minutes after your biopsy so we can make sure you are okay before you leave.

What should I do when I get home?

When you get home, you may wish to take some over-the-counter pain medication such as paracetamol. An ice pack may also reduce discomfort from any pain or bruising. You should avoid strenuous exercise and heavy lifting for 24 to 48 hours after your test to minimise bruising and discomfort. You may also like to wear a bra to bed for extra support. The dressings we use are waterproof, so you can shower as normal. You can remove the dressing after 3 days.

When will I get my results?

Results from your biopsy may take up to 1 week. After your test, we will book a follow-up appointment to discuss your results with you.

When should I contact you?

If you have any concerns after your biopsy, please contact BreastScreen Victoria or your doctor. For problems after business hours, you may wish to go to the Emergency Department at your closest hospital. We encourage you to seek medical advice if you have:

- Bleeding that doesn't stop with compression
- A red, swollen or tender breast



If you have chest pain or shortness of breath in the 24 hours following your biopsy, you should go to the Emergency Department at your closest hospital immediately.

Assessment clinic address:

Next appointment:

Date:

Time:

Book at
breastscreen.org.au
or call **13 20 50**

TTY **13 36 77** if you have hearing
or speech difficulties



For more information or to change your details, visit **breastscreen.org.au** or call **13 20 50**



For interpreter assistance, call **13 14 50**



Translated information:
breastscreen.org.au/translations



BreastScreen Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.