

Fine Needle Aspiration Biopsy

Patient Information Sheet

You have been referred for a fine needle aspiration biopsy (FNAB) by your Doctor.

FNAB is a relatively safe, quick and accurate procedure for determining the nature of a lump or mass. In many cases it can avoid the need for a general anaesthetic and an operation.

FNAB is technique where by a needle is placed in a lump or mass and some cells withdrawn for examination under a microscope.

The technique involves the use of a fine needle which is actually thinner than the needle we use to take blood. Cells are then aspirated from the lump using the needle and syringe. No local anaesthetic is given as the anaesthetic would actually hurt more than the procedure.

Once the needle is removed from the mass, the cells are then spread onto glass slides for examination in our laboratory. The procedure is usually performed at least twice, sometimes three times to ensure that there are sufficient cells present for examination.

The main complications which can arise are:

1. Local Pain – some discomfort or pain is often felt but this is usually minor, often less than the discomfort felt after blood is taken from a vein. Should pain occur after the procedure, Panadol or Panadeine can be taken which should be effective. If the pain persists or worsens, please contact referring doctor or these rooms .
2. Local Bleeding – this can occur after the needle is withdrawn from the mass. To control this, local pressure is applied to the needle site by the assistant. When the procedure is complete, a bandaid is placed is placed over the needle sites which can then be removed that evening, usually under the shower.
3. Local Infection – this is very uncommon but should the area become infected with signs of pus, local redness, or tenderness, pain and swelling, please see your referring doctor.
4. Adjacent structures – this is rare complication where by the needle can pass into adjacent structures. Whilst every effort is made to avoid this complication, you should be aware this is a risk of the procedure.

Please feel free to ask any questions you might have to the attending Pathologist or assistant.