

# Surgical Breast Biopsy

Diagnosing the Cause of Your Breast Problem





# If You Need a Biopsy

You may have just found a lump in your breast. Or your healthcare provider may have noticed a change during an exam. It's normal to worry. But the welcome news is that most breast lumps are not due to cancer. In fact, many require little or no treatment. To help find the cause of your breast problem, you may be asked to have a **biopsy** (a procedure to remove a sample of tissue). This product explains what it's like to have a biopsy and what the results can tell you.

## What Causes Breast Lumps?

Many breast lumps are caused by harmless (**benign**) changes in your breasts. Your own female hormones often play a role. But sometimes a lump is cancerous (**malignant**). In such cases, finding and treating it early gives you the best chance for a healthy future.

## The Role of Biopsy

A biopsy is used to help find the cause of a breast problem. This may be a lump you can feel. Or it may be a breast change that can only be seen on a **mammogram** (breast x-ray). Some types of biopsy can be done in a doctor's office. Other types may be performed in an outpatient setting.



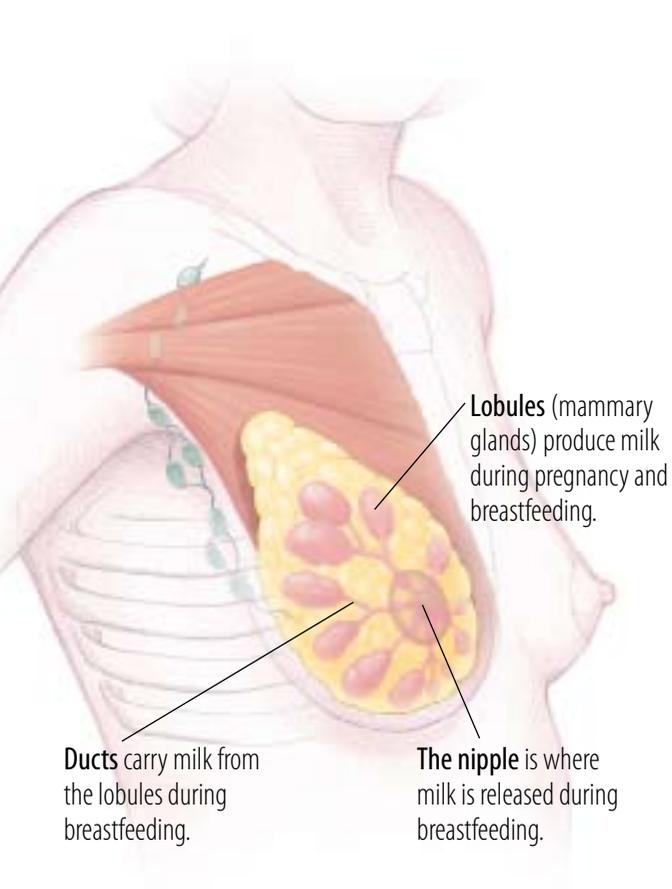


# Learning About Breast Biopsy

Breasts come in all shapes and sizes. But every woman has the same basic breast features. Your doctor will recommend a type of biopsy based on the breast tissue to be sampled. The site of the lump or breast change is also a factor.

## Surgical Biopsies

**Surgical** biopsy requires a skin incision. This differs from percutaneous biopsies, which use needles or special probes to remove samples through the skin. Specific surgical biopsy methods are listed here.



## Surgical Biopsies

**Large core biopsy** uses a hollow instrument to remove a tissue sample. Guided imaging may be used to find a breast mass.



**Open surgical biopsy** removes a tissue sample through a skin incision.





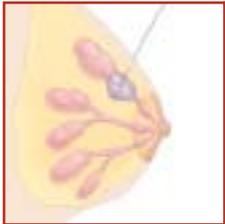
# Surgical Biopsy

A surgical biopsy allows your doctor to take a large sample of tissue. In fact, the whole lump is often removed. The sample is then sent to a lab for study. Most surgical biopsies are done in a hospital or clinic. They are performed on an outpatient basis.

## Understanding the Risks

Risks that may occur with surgical biopsy include:

- Excessive bleeding or bruising
- Infection
- Problems from the anesthesia
- Poor wound healing
- Small change in breast contour



## If You Need Wire Localization

A lump that can't be felt may be hard to locate. In such a case, one or more guide wires may be placed in your breast before biopsy surgery. These thin wires help mark the tissue that is to be removed. A mammogram or ultrasound is used to direct the wire's placement. Then you're taken to the operating room for surgery. The wire is removed during the biopsy.



## Large Core Biopsy

A small incision is made in the skin. The hollow instrument is inserted through this incision. A local anesthetic will be used to numb the site. Before the biopsy, a guide wire may be placed to mark the breast mass. Often the entire mass is removed. Large core biopsy takes about an hour to perform. Due to the size of the sample removed, stitches are often needed.



## Open Surgical Biopsy

To keep you from feeling pain during the biopsy, you are likely to be given intravenous sedation. This produces a light sleep. Your surgeon then makes one incision in your breast. If possible, this is done in a way that hides the scar. In most cases, all of the lump is removed. The incision is closed with stitches. Some stitches dissolve on their own. Others may need to be removed when the incision heals.

## Before the Biopsy

Tell your surgeon about any medications, vitamins, or herbs you take. This includes drugs such as aspirin. Some of these may affect your body's response during surgery. On the day of the biopsy, wear a loose shirt that buttons in front. Also, be sure to arrange for a trusted adult to drive you home.

## After the Biopsy

Usually you can go home the day of the biopsy, no matter which method is used. You may have bruising and swelling for a few days. If you need them, your surgeon may prescribe pain medications. Ice packs can also help ease minor soreness or swelling. Leave your dressing on for as long as your surgeon suggests. Also, follow your surgeon's advice about bathing and exercise.



During open surgical biopsy, all or part of the lump is removed.

## When to Call Your Surgeon

After large core or open surgical biopsy, call your surgeon if you have any of these:

- A fever over 101° F (38.3° C)
- Increased pain, warmth, or redness at the incision site
- Severe swelling that doesn't go away in a few days
- Drainage from the incision site
- Bleeding that soaks through the dressing
- Cough, chest pain, or shortness of breath



# Breast Health for Life

Now is the best time to start taking care of your breasts. Mammograms, clinical exams, and monthly breast self-exams help you stay healthy.

## Screening Guidelines

A positive plan\* for breast health includes:

- An annual mammogram from age 40 onward.
- A clinical breast exam every 3 years between ages 20 and 39, annually from age 40 onward.

If you're wondering about doing breast self-exams or whether to start screening sooner, talk to your healthcare provider.



## Resources

The following resources can help you learn more about benign breast lumps and breast cancer:

**National Women's Health Information Center**  
[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

\*Recommendations follow the American Cancer Society's guidelines.

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