

This fact sheet provides information on **Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA)** or **biopsy** procedures which are performed at Melbourne Radiology Clinic. Both procedures are similar and involve removing a small amount of tissue with the use of a needle. The tissue sample is then sent to pathology for interpretation by a medical specialist known as a Pathologist.

An **FNA** involves inserting a thin needle into the tissue that requires sampling and then applying suction to the needle tip whilst also turning the needle tip. This removes small fragments of tissue that are then analysed. The advantage of an FNA is that it is slightly less invasive than a biopsy, however, as the tissue sampled is small, it is possible that the specimen obtained is not sufficient for a confident diagnosis to be made. The procedure may then need to be repeated or “upgraded” to a biopsy.

A **biopsy** involves the use of a larger needle which removes a solid block of tissue (known as a “core”) and is therefore slightly more invasive, though usually feels no different from an FNA as adequate local anaesthesia is used in both procedures. Since a core of solid tissue is removed (unlike the FNA where fragmented cells are withdrawn), the specimen is excellent and typically is sufficient enough so that a confident and definitive diagnosis is made.

Preparation

- **Blood thinning medications that you are currently taking should be ceased prior to any biopsy or FNA** (Aspirin and Warfarin for 5 days, Plavix for 7 days & Iscover for 8 days).
- Fasting is generally not required, unless otherwise specified.
- We ask that you bring a responsible person to drive you home afterwards.
- If you have had a heart valve replacement, it may be necessary to take antibiotics before the procedure. Please discuss this with your cardiologist/cardiac surgeon and take antibiotics as directed.
- If you have any other queries relating to your particular condition and intended procedure, please call Melbourne Radiology Clinic to discuss further.

Procedure

An FNA or biopsy is a safe procedure that will require the injection of local anaesthetic to numb the relevant area. Depending on the body tissue to be sampled, a CT (Computed Tomography) scanner or ultrasound unit is used to guide the radiologist (a specialist doctor) in locating the exact tissue requiring study. The procedure is conducted in a lying position and often more than one sample may be taken. Intravenous sedation or pain relief is usually not required as local anaesthesia is in most instances sufficient.



The duration of the FNA/biopsy depends upon the number of samples required and the area of the body that is undergoing the procedure of the biopsy. An FNA/biopsy of the breast, thyroid, soft tissues and muscles usually takes no more than 5 minutes. A bone or spine biopsy may take longer, for example greater than 15 minutes. Of course, some procedures may be technically more complex, in which case, the time taken naturally may be longer. Our reception staff will indicate the amount of time it usually takes upon booking your appointment. You will also need to allow for time to arrive to the clinic, register and also following the procedure you may be required to be observed for a short time after the procedure.

If you are having an FNA/biopsy of the lungs, you will have to stay in the clinic for 4 hours and be discharged only after a precautionary chest X-ray is satisfactory. Patients also undergoing an FNA/biopsy of the abdominal organs will also need to be observed for 4 hours, though do not required any further scans to be cleared for discharge. A dressing is usually applied which may be removed after 24 hours. Avoid strenuous exercise during this time. Expect some minimal swelling and tenderness which rarely may require some paracetamol for pain (not aspirin or any other anti-inflammatory medications). If you experience significant pain, redness or bleeding, please contact our clinic immediately.

Results

The results of the FNA/biopsy are dependant on the time its takes for the Pathologist to review and thoroughly test all the tissue under a microscope. Usually, the results are available within 2 to 4 days and should be discussed with your referring doctor at a follow-up appointment. Should the Pathologist wish to carry out additional special analysis to gain an accurate diagnosis, then the process may take longer.

- Please ensure that you make a follow up appointment with your referring doctor or health care provider to discuss your results.

REMEMBER ...

- Please bring to the clinic any prior scans (eg. X-rays, ultrasounds, MRI, CT) and reports as these will assist the radiologist in assessing your condition.
- If you have any further queries please call Melbourne Radiology Clinic on **(03) 9667 1667** – we are only too happy to help
- Please note that any referral for a scan is valid at Melbourne Radiology Clinic, even if it has been written on a referral form from another radiology provider.

Whilst every effort is made to keep your appointment time, the special needs of complex cases, elderly and frail patients can cause unexpected delays. Your consideration and patience in these circumstances is appreciated.

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