



The Center for Women

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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Breast Aspiration

A breast aspiration is a method of collecting cells from a lump in the breast to look for signs of cancer, infection, or other conditions. A health professional inserts a thin needle into a lump and withdraws a sample of cells or fluid. The material is then examined under a microscope at the office or sent to an outside laboratory for definitive testing.

This method may be the only test needed to determine the diagnosis but sometimes there has to be additional test performed such as a biopsy.

How is a aspiration done?

The physician will cleanse the area where the lump is found. An injection of local anesthetic to numb the skin may be performed. The physician will hold the lump with one hand and insert a thin needle (attached to a syringe) into the lump. He/she may move the needle in and out of the area to make sure to get enough tissue or fluid for the testing. Then, he/she pulls on the plunger of the syringe to remove the tissue or fluid. The process takes a few seconds to a few minutes.

If the physician can not feel the lump or mass, you may have an imaging test to see where to put the needle. If the lump is a cyst, the fluid is removed, and the lump usually goes away.

How will it feel?

If you receive a local anesthetic, you may feel a brief sting when it is injected. You also may feel some pressure when the aspiration needle is inserted. The amount of discomfort will depend on how much pain you feel from needles and the part of your body involved. The site of the fine-needle aspiration may be sore for a couple of days, and you may have a bruise. You should be able to return to work the same day or the next day.

What happens afterward?

The physician will apply pressure to the aspiration site to prevent bleeding and put an adhesive bandage on it. He/she may recommend that you take a mild pain reliever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, if you have discomfort when you get home. Keep the area dry for 24 hours.

Contact your physician if you have bleeding, redness, swelling, or a fever of more than 100.5 F over the next couple of days.