



Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy

Information for Patients

This leaflet has been written for patients who are having one or two sentinel lymph nodes removed from under their arm. It has been prepared to give you greater understanding of the procedure you are about to undergo. It may not answer all your questions so if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

This procedure is performed in order to establish if there are any cancer cells in your lymph nodes, and therefore helps to determine your treatment plan. The procedure involves having a very small dose of radio-active material into the breast whilst you are awake, this takes place in the x-ray department. You will then return to the ward for a couple of hours until the injected material has had time to travel to your lymph nodes. Once in theatre you will be anaesthetised. Your surgeon will then inject a blue dye into your breast, which travels to the nodes making them more visible, a Geiger counter is also used to help locate the radioactive sentinel nodes.

The blue dye will leave a mark on your breast which can be present for approximately 3 months.

The lymph system body is made up of lymphatic vessels (similar to blood vessels) and the lymph nodes extend throughout your body. The lymph system acts by returning fluid (mainly water) from the tissues back into your blood system. The lymph glands or nodes act as a filter against unwanted materials such as bacteria and therefore help to prevent infection.

There is a failure rate of approximately 5% with this procedure as occasionally cancer cells can bypass the sentinel node.

LYMPHOEDEMA

In the past many nodes would have been removed causing an increased risk of developing lymphoedema- (swelling caused by a build up of lymph fluid in the tissues of your arm). By having only the sentinel nodes removed the risk of lymphoedema is unknown but should be extremely small. However, it is still advisable to follow this advice.



TO HELP PREVENT LYMPHOEDEMA YOU CAN:

- Exercise your arm. You will receive an exercise sheet
- during your hospital stay
- Look after your skin by gently applying moisturiser daily
- If you notice a rash or your arm becomes red and painful contact your G.P or Clinical Nurse Specialist in case you need antibiotics
- Treat any scratches cuts or insect bites. Wash the area immediately, keep clean and apply antiseptic cream
- Use insect repellent
- Wear gloves and long sleeves when gardening
- Wear gloves when washing up
- Avoid getting sunburnt on your arm, use sun cream
- Wherever possible have any injections, blood tests and blood pressure taken in your unaffected arm
- Be careful when removing unwanted underarm hair. Use an electric razor or hair removing cream
- Avoid constricting your arm, for example wearing tight jewellery or watches
- Avoid long periods of strenuous exercise, like pushing and pulling or heavy lifting.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

INFECTION-

As with any operation there is a small risk of infection. Should your wound become red/hot and feel more painful you should contact your Breast Care Nurse or GP as soon as possible.

PAIN-

You may also experience pain/ discomfort/ bruising/ swelling around the wound site. You will be given a supply of painkillers to take home.

ALLERGIC REACTION TO BLUE DYE-

This is extremely rare, if you have any allergies please tell your Surgeon. If an allergic reaction does occur it may be necessary to abandon your operation.



SEROMA-

A seroma is a collection of fluid beneath the wound. This fluid is usually re-absorbed by the body over time. However, if it causes discomfort then please call your Clinical Nurse Specialist Nurse, as it may be necessary to draw off the fluid with a needle and syringe. This procedure is usually quite painless because the surrounding tissue feels numb.

BATHING

You may bath or shower but try to keep your dressing dry. Unfortunately you will not be able to use deodorant until your wound has healed. Your Surgeon or Clinical Nurse Specialist will advise you at your post op appointment.

DRIVING

It is advisable not to drive until you have been seen in outpatients but can usually take around 2 weeks until you will feel comfortable to drive.

FOLLOW UP

You will be given an outpatient appointment for 7 - 10 days after your operation. Please bring a friend or relative with you. The result of your lymph nodes will be given to you at this appointment. PLEASE NOTE: If your sentinel lymph node has been found to contain some cancer cells then you will require a second operation to remove more lymph nodes.

Your stitches will usually be dissolvable or will be taken out in clinic.

RETURN TO WORK

The amount of time you need off work will vary depending on how physical your job is. Most people will need a minimum of 4-6 weeks, however your Surgeon/Clinical Nurse Specialist will be able to give you further advice. The ward will be able to supply you with a sick certificate should you need.



WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED ADVICE

WITHIN WORKING HOURS:

(Mon-Fri 9-3pm)

The Breast Care Nurses

Liz Patterson 01895 279794 or 01895 238282 bleep 760

Nadine Teuton 01895 279738 or 01895 238282 bleep 917

Terry-Anne Leeson 01895 279711 or 01895 238282 bleep 914

OUT OF WORKING HOURS:

(Evenings, weekends)

Please telephone the main hospital switchboard on 01895 238282 and ask to speak to staff on the ward where you stayed.

Further information is also available on the following websites:

www.cancerbacup.org.uk

www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Pub The Breast Care Nurses/N.T 2009



Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

Fadlan waydii haddii aad warbixintan ku rabto luqad ama hab kale. Fadlan la xidhiidh 01895 279 973

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ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Jezeli chcialbys uzyskac te informacje w innym języku lub w duzej czcionce popros
pracownika oddzialu o kontakt pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973

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تصلنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني **01895 279973**

各國語言/模式選擇

若你需要以下資料改為其他語言，大寫，或其他模式例如收音式或盲人字體的話，請電 01895 279973。