



Abnormal Mammograms & Breast Lumps

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If You are Told You Have an Abnormal Mammogram or If You Find a Lump

You will either hear from your mammography clinic or your family doctor.

Being told that your screening mammogram is abnormal or you have a lump found on examination is worrisome. But it is important to remember that most abnormal mammograms and lumps do not mean cancer. Many changes are harmless variations of normal breast tissue. Most women whose mammograms show that further testing is needed will be found not to have cancer.

What are Abnormal Findings On a Mammogram?

- ▶ A breast mass or a shadow that might mean a lump which is sometimes too small to feel.
- ▶ Calcifications – Breast calcifications are common. Many women have some form of calcifications in their breasts, most of which are benign. These are tiny calcium deposits that can be seen only as white spots on a mammogram.
- ▶ Irregular pattern in your breast tissue.

If You Find a Lump?

It could be:

- ▶ Normal breast tissue.
- ▶ A cyst or other non-cancerous lump.
- ▶ A small possibility of cancer.

How Would My Breast Abnormality or Change be Checked?

An abnormal result means you need further tests.

You may have one or more of the following:

- ▶ **Diagnostic Mammogram** – extra views, often using magnification are taken. The radiologist can look more closely at the site of the abnormality.
- ▶ **Ultrasound** – a test that uses sound waves to give more information about lumps.
- ▶ **Biopsy** – usually by a needle with local freezing.

Biopsy

During a needle biopsy small samples of breast tissue are removed and looked at under a microscope. You will get the results in about one week. Your doctor or nurse will inform you of the results when they are available.

There are different types of biopsies. Your doctor or radiologist will talk to you about which kind of biopsy you need.

Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA)

- ▶ Takes a few seconds and causes no more pain than a blood test.
- ▶ Local freezing is often used.
- ▶ The doctor uses a syringe and a very fine needle to draw out some fluid or cells from a lump.
- ▶ The needle can be directed into the lump by feel or with ultrasound guidance.

Core Needle Biopsy

- ▶ The needle is guided by mammogram or by ultrasound.
- ▶ Core biopsies are performed with a local freezing. There should not be any pain during the biopsy.

Remember, you will get the results in about a week.

If you need further testing your doctor or nurse will talk to you about it.