

Open Breast Biopsy: Before Your Surgery

Many people feel nervous before an open breast biopsy.

You may have concerns about how it will feel and what the biopsy results will be.

But it can help when you know what to expect and how to prepare.

An open breast biopsy, or surgical biopsy, is surgery to remove an area of abnormal tissue from the breast to check for breast cancer.

It's often done if you've had a needle breast biopsy and the results were uncertain.

Or it may be done to check a lump in your breast or an area of concern that was found during a mammogram, ultrasound, or MRI.

After an open biopsy, the tissue sample is sent to a lab where a doctor will examine it.

Before surgery you'll get medicine, called anesthesia, to keep you from feeling pain.

And you may be given medicine to help you relax or make you sleep during the biopsy.

To do the biopsy, the doctor will make a cut, called an incision, in your breast.

The location of the incision will depend on the area of your breast that's being biopsied.

The doctor may be able to make the incision in an area where it will be less noticeable.

This could be in the fold of skin below your breast, in the skin near your underarm, or at the edge of your areola.

Next, the doctor will remove part—or all—of the abnormal tissue through the incision.

Then doctor will close the incision with stitches or strips of tape and cover the area with a bandage.

After surgery, you'll be able to go home the same day.

Your doctor may get some results right away after your breast biopsy.

But it can take up to 2 weeks to get the final results.

Follow your care provider's instructions for how to get ready for the surgery.

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Before the surgery, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners, including aspirin.

Some of these can increase the risk of bleeding or cause other problems.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before surgery.

And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for surgery, including when, or if, you should stop eating and drinking.

Bring your photo ID, health insurance card, and any paperwork that your hospital may have asked for.

Be sure you have someone to take you home.

Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.

Having a breast biopsy can be stressful.

But it may help to remember that your care team is there to make sure you are okay and as comfortable as possible.

And remember, you can always call your doctor if you have questions or concerns.