

Patient information factsheet

Bone marrow biopsy

We have given you this factsheet because you have been referred for a bone marrow biopsy. It explains what a bone marrow biopsy is, what the procedure involves and how to prepare for it. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What is a bone marrow biopsy?

A bone marrow biopsy involves removing small samples of bone marrow from the back of your hip (pelvic bone) for testing. Bone marrow is the spongy tissue inside your bones which produces your red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets (blood-clotting cells). The samples will then be taken to a laboratory, where they will be looked at under a microscope and analysed.

Why do I need this procedure?

A bone marrow biopsy can help doctors:

- detect any abnormal cells in the bone marrow
- identify and diagnose the cause of any abnormal blood cell counts
- decide on the best treatment for some blood conditions
- monitor the progression of certain conditions
- assess how treatment is working

How should I prepare for the procedure?

Eating and drinking

You may eat and drink as normal before the procedure.

Driving

The local anaesthetic and pain relief we give you before and possibly during the procedure will not affect your ability to drive, so you can drive to and from your appointment.

Anticoagulant medications

Anticoagulant medications increase your risk of bleeding from bone marrow biopsies. If you take any anticoagulant medications, please contact your doctor for advice about how to safely stop these medications before your procedure. Anticoagulant medications include:

- warfarin
- apixaban (Eliquis)
- edoxaban (Lixiana)
- rivaroxaban (Xarelto)
- dabigatran (Pradaxa)
- enoxaparin (Clexane or Inhixa)

Antiplatelet medications

It is safe to continue taking aspirin before your procedure. Please contact your doctor for advice if you are taking clopidogrel, ticagrelor or prasugrel.

What will happen during the procedure?

The procedure will be performed in a side room by a doctor or an advanced care practitioner (ACP).

We will explain the procedure to you. This is a good opportunity to ask any questions you may have. We will then ask you to complete a consent form to say that you agree to the procedure.

We will ask you to lie on your side on a bed with your knees bent up to your chest. We will then inject the area around the back of your pelvic bone (where we will take the sample of bone marrow from) with a local anaesthetic (lidocaine). This may sting briefly before going numb. If additional pain relief is needed, we can also give you Entonox[®] (also known as 'gas and air').

Once the area is numb, we will insert a needle into your pelvic bone to suck out a sample of liquid bone marrow (this is called a bone marrow aspirate). It can feel uncomfortable for a few seconds when we draw the liquid bone marrow into the syringe. We will then usually insert a slightly thicker needle to take another sample of the more solid bone marrow tissue (this is called a bone marrow trephine). You may feel some pushing and pressure during this part of the procedure. You may also feel a sharp sensation when we take the sample and when we remove the needle. Please let us know if you feel very uncomfortable.

We will finish the procedure by placing a sterile dressing over the biopsy site. You should not need any stitches.

The procedure will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

What will happen after the procedure?

We will ask you to lie down for 15 to 30 minutes after the procedure, so we can make sure your biopsy puncture site doesn't start bleeding. We will then check your biopsy puncture site and dressing again. After this, you will be able to go home.

Your dressing should remain in place for approximately three days. Please ensure you keep your dressing dry for two days. You can then bathe or shower as normal.

Are there any side effects?

A bone marrow biopsy is a very safe procedure with few risks. However, as with all medical procedures, there are some possible side effects. These can include:

Back or leg pain

You may experience some mild back or leg pain for one to two days after the procedure. You can take over-the-counter pain relief, such as paracetamol or codeine-based products, to help with this. Always read the label or instructions before taking them.

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Bleeding

There is a small risk that you may experience bleeding from the biopsy puncture site. In the unlikely event of this happening, apply direct pressure to your dressing for 20 minutes. If the bleeding persists or you have any concerns, please contact your nurse specialist or ward C7 day unit on: **023 8120 4177** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm).

Outside of these hours, please contact the 24-hour acute oncology emergency phone line on: **023 8120 1345**.

Infection

There is a small risk that you may develop an infection at the biopsy puncture site. Contact your doctor or nurse specialist if you notice any redness or fluid oozing from the biopsy puncture site.

When will I receive my results?

Your results will be available within a couple of weeks and will be sent to the doctor who referred you for this procedure. They will contact you to arrange an appointment to discuss your results.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the numbers below.

Ward C7 day unit

Telephone: **023 8120 4177** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Treatment schedulers

Telephone: **023 8120 8497** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm)

Useful links

www.bloodcancer.org.uk

www.myeloma.org.uk/understanding-myeloma

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/diagnostic-tests/bone-marrow-test

www.lymphoma-action.org.uk

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**