Bone Marrow Biopsy

Information for patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

Your doctor has advised you that you need to have a sample of your bone marrow taken. This is called a bone marrow biopsy.

What is a bone marrow biopsy?

Bone marrow is a spongy material that fills the bones and produces cells which develop into blood cells. The bone marrow sample is taken from the back of your hip bone.

Do I need to do anything to prepare for this test?

No. You can eat and drink as normal. You do not need to bring anything with you for the test itself. As with any test you may be feeling anxious, so you are welcome to bring someone with you.

Does it hurt?

This test is not completely pain free. The local anaesthetic injection will numb the area that surrounds the bone but cannot numb the bone itself. Although you may have some pain, this is for a very short time.

You may have some aching for a few days after in the area where the sample is taken. You can take mild painkillers such as Paracetamol tablets to help relieve this. You should always follow the instructions provided in the leaflet supplied with your tablets.

How long does the biopsy take?

It takes less than 30 minutes for most patients.
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What are the risks and possible complications?

A bone marrow biopsy has very few risks. Very rarely we may need to take a sample from another place, if so, this will be discussed with you.

- **bleeding.** A dressing will be placed over your wound.
- **bruising.** This is normal and should only last a few days.
- **infection at the site of the biopsy.** If you notice any swelling or redness you should contact the Haematology Day Unit for advice.

What are the benefits of this test?

This is a very safe and quick test that can help us find out exactly what the problem is with your blood and plan the best treatment for you.

Is there any alternative to a bone marrow biopsy?

No. This test is needed to diagnose or rule out a problem with your bone marrow. Many patients who have a blood problem will need to have a bone marrow test at some time. This may be to help with the diagnosis or to see how the disease is responding to treatment. If you decide you do not want this test you will be referred back to your consultant.

What will happen before the procedure?

You will be seen by one of the doctors or nurses, who will tell you the time of your procedure and answer any questions you may have. Before your procedure one of the doctor or nurse will again explain the reasons for your procedure, the procedure itself, and the precautions we take to avoid any risks or complications. When you fully understand the procedure you will be asked to sign a consent form, if you have not already done so.

You will be asked to lie on your side. You will not be asked to remove your clothing but you will need to expose the area by lowering your underwear. The area where the sample is taken will be cleaned with an antiseptic before you are given an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area.

What will happen during the procedure?

Once the anaesthetic has started to work, another needle is passed into your bone marrow. You will feel the doctor or nurse pushing and you may feel the needle which may cause you to jump; this is normal.

In most cases, no more than a few drops of liquid are taken, although sometimes more is required for additional tests. Some people feel a stinging sensation and have some discomfort or pain but this lasts only for a few seconds.
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The doctor or nurse usually takes a further sample of the bone using the same needle entry site as before, if needed, more anaesthetic can be used. This takes a little longer than the first needle and once again can be painful but lasts only a few seconds.

What will happen after the procedure?

Your wound will be covered by a small dressing which can be removed later in the day or the next day.

Following the test you will be asked to rest for 10 - 15 minutes. You can then return to your normal activities.

Can I drive after the procedure?

Yes, although you may feel sore and prefer to arrange for someone to drive you home.

When will I know the results?

You will usually be sent a follow-up appointment to see your consultant who will discuss your results with you.

Contact numbers

University Hospital of North Tees

Haematology Day Unit
telephone: 01642 383578
Monday – Friday, 8.00am – 7.00pm

University Hospital of Hartlepool

Chemotherapy Day Unit
telephone: 01429 522760
Monday - Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Further information available from:

NHS Choices
telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)
Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones or via the website at www.nhs.uk
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This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk.

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we’re doing well or if there’s anything which we can improve, that’s why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

    telephone: 01642 624719
    Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm
    Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

    freephone: 0800 092 0084
    Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883
    Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

    telephone: 01642 617617
    24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based at the University Hospital of North Tees. It is near the lifts in the main tower block.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

    telephone: 01642 833551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

University Hospital of North Tees, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees. TS19 8PE
University Hospital of Hartlepool, Holdforth Road, Hartlepool. TS24 9AH

    Telephone: 01642 617617
    Fax: 01642 624089