

FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATION

Patient Information

You have been asked by your doctor to make an appointment with Anatomic Pathology Service (APS) to have a procedure called a Fine Needle Aspirate (FNA).

The FNA test is performed by passing a fine (thin) needle through the skin to obtain some cells from a superficial lump in the body.

The consultation will begin with a pathologist asking you some questions and examining the lump. The pathologist will then proceed with the sample collection. The skin in the area around the lump is cleaned with alcohol. A fine needle will then be inserted through the skin into the lump and moved about to obtain a sample of cells.

This sample will then be examined under the microscope to see if there are enough cells for analysis in the laboratory. If there are not enough cells, up to three more aspirations will be performed until sufficient material is obtained.

It is very important that you tell the pathologist if you are on blood thinners, such as aspirin or warfarin. The FNA procedure does not normally cause excessive bleeding, but if you are on blood thinners, extra precautions will be taken to guard against this.

When the procedure is completed, pressure must be applied to the site to minimise any bruising, before the site is covered with a plaster. The plaster can be removed later the same day. The site requires no special attention, apart from keeping the area clean. If any bleeding, infection or unusual symptoms occur, contact your doctor.

The consultation and sample collection will take about 20 minutes depending on the ease of obtaining the sample. Most of the time is taken up with the sample preparation and the examination under the microscope.

In the laboratory, slides are stained and carefully screened by at least one, usually

two cytotechnologists before a pathologist makes an assessment. It may be decided that further studies may be required, such as cell blocks.

The results of the test cannot be given to you at the time of the consultation as further screening of the cells is required to give a diagnosis. The results are sent to the referring doctor, who usually makes an appointment for you to discuss the results.

If you are a New Zealand citizen or resident there is no charge for the consultation or sample collection.

We welcome your comments or suggestions about your visit to Anatomic Pathology Service. If you would like to give feedback, please send your comments to our Customer Services team:

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Or you can contact the ADHB Consumer Liaison team:

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