



Patient Advice Leaflet for Head and Neck Ultrasound Investigation

Your doctor / surgeon has arranged for you to have an ultrasound of your head and neck. This leaflet is intended to answer some questions which you may have in advance of the procedure.

What is an ultrasound investigation?

Ultrasound uses high frequency sound waves to see beneath the skin surface. This test is an effective, safe, and painless way to look at the soft tissues of the neck and face, and often is the first step to examine the glands and any lumps in the neck. The test does not use any ionising radiation like x-rays.

What do I need to do before the test?

There is no preparation needed for this scan. Please eat and drink as normal. Take all medications as normal. DO NOT stop any blood thinning medications or anticoagulants before the procedure, however, please inform the sonographer / radiologist beforehand.

Please carefully check your appointment date and time. If you cannot keep your appointment or have any questions, please contact us on any of the following numbers:

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital	0121 424 2586
Good Hope Hospital	0121 424 7374
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	0121 371 2364
Solihull Hospital	0121 424 5272

What happens during the procedure?

You will be asked to lie down on a bed whilst the scan is performed. Some water based gel and a small probe is placed on your skin. You are awake during the scan and the operator may ask you to turn your head from side to side whilst they take the images and examine your neck.

What should I wear?

The examination will normally be done with you wearing your own clothes. You will need to be able to expose your whole neck to the top of your chest so we would suggest avoiding high necked items of clothing. Headscarves and neck ties will need to be removed. Water based gel will be applied to the skin of the area being scanned and paper will be used to protect your clothes, but this cannot always be completely avoided. The gel should not stain your clothes. The gel will wash out of any facial hair.

How long does the procedure last?

The whole appointment should last no more than 30 minutes. You can leave the hospital straight afterwards.

Who will perform the procedure?

The ultrasound will be performed by a radiologist (a doctor trained in ultrasound), a sonographer (a radiographer trained in ultrasound) or a radiology specialist registrar who is being supervised by a consultant.

What if a biopsy is needed?

If the ultrasound scan shows an area which is recommended for biopsy your doctor/ sonographer will discuss this with you. This biopsy will help with diagnosis and whether further treatment is required.

What happens during a biopsy?

- Once the area has been identified by ultrasound, the skin is cleaned with an antiseptic. This is to minimise the risk of infection and is not absorbed by the body.
- Often a small injection of local anaesthetic will be given at the biopsy site to numb the skin.
- A further biopsy needle is then passed through the skin which takes a sample of the area of concern. This will likely be repeated a few times to ensure an adequate sample is taken.
- Afterwards pressure is placed on the skin to reduce bruising and a plaster is placed over the site.

Does it hurt?

You may feel a stinging sensation when the local anaesthetic is given to the skin. The remainder of the procedure should not be painful. If it is painful more local anaesthetic could be given. You may then feel a pressure / pushing sensation during the procedure.

Are there any risks associated with the biopsy?

After the local anaesthetic wears off you may feel soreness. Paracetamol can help with this if needed.

There is a small risk of bruising and less likely bleeding, however this risk is minimised by using the ultrasound imaging to avoid blood vessels. In the extremely unlikely event of a rapid swelling occurring, you should apply pressure to the area and attend A&E.

There is a small risk of infection, however the procedure is performed under strict infection control conditions to minimise this risk. After the procedure, if you experience redness or swelling around the area or a high temperature you may need to see your GP for some antibiotics. This is extremely rare.

Lastly, there is a risk that the biopsy samples may not provide enough information for diagnosis and repeat sampling may be required.

What will happen after the biopsy?

- You can go straight home afterwards. You can eat and drink as normal.
- You are advised to avoid vigorous exercise for the rest of the day.
- Most people can return to work the same day or the next day.
- You may have some bruising to the overlying skin for a few days afterwards; this may be more extensive if you are on blood thinning medications or anticoagulants.

Information for Patients

- You may feel a dull ache or discomfort when the local anaesthesia wears off, if necessary, you can take a simple painkiller such as paracetamol.
- You can remove the plaster later that day.

When will the results be available?

The results of your biopsy will be sent to the doctor / surgeon who asked for your ultrasound. They will inform you of the results. These normally take a few weeks. Any further treatment will be discussed with you at your next appointment.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.