Fine Needle Aspiration of Thyroid Nodule Using Ultrasound

A fine needle aspiration (FNA) or biopsy of a thyroid nodule is a simple test done by an endocrinologist to check for cancer cells. The needle used is very small and a numbing cream may be used to prevent pain. A number of samples will be taken from different parts of the nodule. This helps your doctor find any cancer cells if a tumor is present.

You will not need to stop eating or drinking ahead of time. Patients often return home or go back to work after the biopsy, without any ill effects. Although the test is not perfect, a thyroid needle biopsy should tell us enough so that other tests are not needed. Your doctor can then use these results to decide your course of treatment.

FNA Using Ultrasound

The ultrasound helps guide the needle placement for biopsy and reduces the chance of an inconclusive biopsy. An ultrasound-guided FNA is done by an endocrinologist along with a cytotechnologist. The slides are then reviewed by a cytopathologist.

- You will lie on a table with a pillow under your neck.
- A clear jelly will be put on your neck and an ultrasound probe will be used to look for nodules.
- If a nodule(s) is found, your neck will be cleaned with alcohol. A fine needle will be passed 3 to 6 times into the nodule. A cytotechnologist will be there to decide whether enough samples have been obtained.
- It can take from 15 to 60 minutes. It will depend on how many nodules are biopsied.
- Results will be sent to your doctor within 5 days.

Patients often feel mild discomfort during the procedure and some soreness for one to two days after. A small amount of bruising is also common.

You may resume your normal routine after the test with no restrictions.

Phone Numbers

Endocrinology Clinic at (608) 263-5010, Monday through Friday from 8am - 4:30pm.

After hours, weekends and holidays, you will reach the paging operator. Ask to speak to the resident on call for Endocrinology. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live outside the area, call toll-free (800) 323-8942.