

Why do I need a biopsy of my thyroid nodule?

To help decide if the nodule should be surgically removed.

It may need to be followed up with a repeat fine needle biopsy in 2 to 12 months.

What is the risk of the nodule being cancer?

Very few of the nodules prove to be cancer: only about 4 in 100.

Thyroid nodules are commonly encountered, especially amongst certain ethnic groups. Thyroid cancers are frequently slow growing, and the majority of patients who are found to have thyroid cancer go on to live a normal life. Most nodules which need surgery are benign tumours which, if not removed, will continue to grow. Sometimes a benign nodule has to be removed because it causes symptoms such as difficulty in breathing or swallowing.

How do people get thyroid nodules?

In Australia the cause of many of the nodules is largely unknown.

Thyroid nodules occur more commonly in women. Too little iodine in the food, tumours or inflammation are some of the known causes for these nodules.

What is a fine needle biopsy?

A tiny needle, similar to an acupuncture needle, is inserted into the nodule and moved up and down a few times. The tip of the needle extracts tiny pieces of tissue which can then be placed on a glass slide, smeared, stained and interpreted by a cytopathologist. The entire nodule cannot be sampled with one tiny needle. Two or more additional needles will have to be inserted into different areas of the nodule to obtain representative samples. This will enable the cytopathologist to assess whether the nodule should be removed or not.

Some of the nodules are cystic as a result of previous bleeding into the nodule. In these instances as much of the fluid as possible will be removed.

Is local anaesthetic given?

No.

This is usually not necessary as very tiny needles are used.

How long does the procedure take?

The actual fine needle biopsy takes only a few seconds.

The whole episode takes about 20 to 30 minutes. If the nodule is difficult to feel or biopsy, an ultrasound machine may be necessary to guide the needle into the nodule.

Will further fine needle biopsies be necessary?

In most patients a second fine needle biopsy will be necessary.

In instances where there are insufficient cells or only fluid is obtained the cytopathologist may require a second fine needle biopsy to confirm the cause of the nodule. This will usually happen within 4 to 6 weeks. Also when surgery is being considered, examination of a further sample may be helpful.

Are there any complications?

Complications are uncommon except for bleeding into the nodule.

To minimise the risk of bleeding with fine needle biopsy, tiny needles are used and the doctor will ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds during the procedure.

If complications do occur after the fine needle biopsy, please contact your doctor for advice. Bleeding more often occurs spontaneously into the nodule. When this happens a lump may suddenly appear in the neck.

Who performs the fine needle biopsy and analyses the sample?

Highly experienced specialists are available to perform the ultrasound and fine needle biopsy and interpret the samples.

How long does it take to get a result?

If a cytopathologist is performing the procedure or is present at the ultrasound-guided fine needle biopsy, a preliminary result can be given within a few minutes. Some samples which need additional tests may take 24 hours or longer.

Fine Needle Aspirate Clinic Locations

Appointments are required for Fine Needle Aspirates.

Your referring doctor may make the booking on your behalf. If you are making the booking personally, please contact the clinic most convenient to you. Details of the clinic locations are shown below.

Metropolitan Clinics

Bondi Junction

Shop 1, Ground floor,
3 Waverley Street
Ph: (02) 8833 4433

Hurstville

Shop 1, 1 Butler Road
Ph: (02) 9005 7490

Miranda

26-28 Gibbs Street
Ph: (02) 9005 7490

North Ryde

60 Waterloo Road
Ph: (02) 9005 7490

Westmead

Suite 6, Ground Floor
151-155 Hawkesbury Road
Ph: (02) 8833 4400
Ph: (02) 8833 4400

Regional Clinics

ACT

Suite 8, Corinna Chambers
Corinna Street, Woden
Ph: (02) 6282 3499

Armidale

161 Rusden Street
Ph: (02) 6768 5334

Gosford

North Gosford Medical Centre
66 Etna Street
Ph: (02) 4324 1088

Newcastle

Bradford Close (off Northcott Drv)
Kotara
Ph: (02) 4923 4234

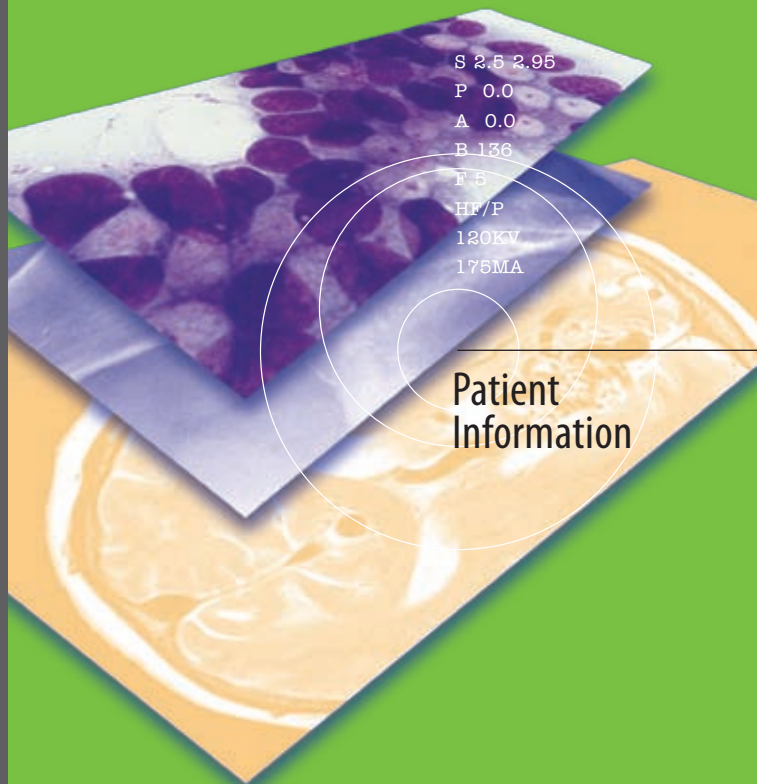
Port Macquarie

The Hermitage Medical Centre
72-80 Lake Road
Ph: (02) 6583 3499

Tamworth

128 Marius Street
Ph: (02) 6768 5334

Understanding Fine Needle Biopsy of Thyroid Nodules



Your next appointment:

Date: Time: