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Thyroid Fine Needle Aspiration Biopsy

Your physician has determined that you have a thyroid nodule, which is a “lump” or “growth” in your thyroid. Most nodules are benign, but they can be cancerous up to 10% of the time. A fine needle aspiration biopsy is the only non-surgical method of determining which nodules may be cancerous.

BEFORE THE FNA

What is a fine needle aspiration (FNA)?

It is a simple procedure, similar to having blood drawn from your arm. The needle used is thinner than the one used for drawing blood. A few drops of fluid will be extracted from a nodule and sent to the lab.

My thyroid is large and has to be removed, do I still need an FNA?

Yes, in order to give the most information to the surgeon. If the nodule is cancerous, knowing this in advance will help the surgeon plan accordingly.

Do I need a ride or someone to accompany me to the office?

No, you will not need a ride and can come alone. Getting an FNA is similar to getting your blood drawn.

How long will I spend in the doctor's office?

The procedure usually takes 10 to 15 minutes, but be prepared to spend 45 minutes in our office.

Will I be given local anesthesia or put to sleep for the FNA?

No, we do not inject any local anesthetic, as it can affect the results and stings, which can be more uncomfortable than the FNA. We use numbing cream and an ice pack, which is typically sufficient.

Should I fast before the FNA?

No, you do not need to fast. There are no restrictions either before or after the FNA.

Should I stop my medications before the FNA?

No, you do not need to stop any medications before the FNA.

(OVER)

DURING THE FNA

What does the procedure consist of?

The skin is cleaned with an alcohol swab (no iodine or betadine is used). The ultrasound machine is then used to locate and guide a needle into your thyroid nodule. Each nodule is sampled three times.

How long will the needle be in my neck?

The needle is usually inserted into the nodule for 10 to 15 seconds each time.

AFTER THE FNA

Will I need a bandage or dressing after the procedure?

No, most of the time not even a “band-aid” is necessary.

Can I drive and/or eat after undergoing an FNA?

Yes, an FNA is comparable to having blood drawn, and there are no restrictions afterwards.

Will I need a painkiller after the FNA?

Most patients do not require any pain medication, but if needed you can take Tylenol.

Will I be able to exercise or work out after the procedure?

Yes, you may exercise or work out after the FNA.

Should I plan on taking the day off from work after the FNA?

No, you may go back to work after the procedure. There are no restrictions.

What happens after the FNA is performed?

The samples are sent to the pathologist who will examine them, make a diagnosis, and issue a report.

How do I get the results of the FNA?

The office will call you within one week with the results. If you do not hear from us within that time, you should call the office. If the results are abnormal, you will be asked to schedule an appointment to discuss the results. We will also send a copy of the results to your primary care and referring physician.

Do I need to follow up after the FNA?

You will need a follow up appointment only if the results are abnormal. However, you will still need periodic monitoring and long-term follow up of your nodules even if the results are normal. A treatment and follow up plan will be discussed with you during the FNA appointment.