



## **FNA Cytology – Fine Needle Aspiration service**

### **Patient Information**

#### **FNA Cytology**

Your doctor has requested a Fine Needle Aspiration to be performed by a pathologist or pathology registrar at Waikato DHB.

#### **What is a Fine Needle Aspiration procedure?**

A Fine Needle Aspiration is a quick and reliable procedure. A pathologist passes a fine (thin) needle through the skin to get cells from a lump in the body. In many cases this is an alternative to cutting out the lump.

It causes minimal discomfort, and is a quick and accurate method of finding out the nature of the lump. The needle used is much smaller than a standard blood test needle.

The pathologist performing the test then examines the cells under a microscope.

#### **Why do I need a Fine Needle Aspirate done?**

Your doctor feels that a cytological (cellular) FNA will help understand the nature of your lump, and whether anything further needs to be done. Often the test shows that a lump is harmless and can be left alone.

Other lumps are best removed. In such cases, the results may help surgeons to plan better if they know exactly what is wrong.

#### **How is the Fine Needle Aspiration performed?**

An FNA involves a consultation and sample collection with a specialist pathologist/ pathology registrar. This will take about 20 minutes.

After asking some questions and examining the lump, the pathologist/registrar cleans the skin with alcohol.

The pathologist then inserts a very fine needle through the skin into the lump and moves it about to obtain a sample of cells.

Generally, two or three needle 'sticks' are necessary to obtain enough material. On completion, the pressure is applied for several minutes to minimise any bruising. You are able to resume normal activities after the procedure.

Most patients compare the sensation to a blood test. It is not usually necessary to use anaesthetic.

## **Will there be any complications?**

Significant problems are rare. There may be some minor bruising, swelling and tenderness for a few days.

Occasionally a tingling is noted during the aspiration. This may mean a small nerve has been touched.

Rarely, patients having FNAs around the chest area notice shortness of breath or chest pain after aspiration. This may be due to air entering the chest (pneumothorax). If you think this may have happened, please contact the pathologist or your own doctor.

It is very important that you tell the pathologist/ registrar 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.

## **Are the results reliable?**

The results of Fine Needle Aspiration are highly reliable but depend on a good sampling.

Some lumps do not shed many cells. Sometimes the lump is difficult to find and sample with the needle.

If a good sample is not obtained, further investigation may be needed some time after an FNA.

False negative results can occur, if at any time after an FNA examination you notice any change in a lump, or you are still concerned, you should see your doctor again.

## **May I have a support person?**

You may have another person of your choice with you during the interview and procedure. If you wish to have a laboratory staff member for support during the procedure, please tell the pathologist or receptionist before the consultation.

## **When do I get my results?**

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 with you to discuss the results.

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

## **Where do we do FNA at Waikato DHB?**

Reception A, Level 1, Meade Clinical Centre

If you require any more information please contact the Cytology laboratory at Waikato DHB.