

Information for Patients: Bone Marrow Biopsy

What is a bone marrow biopsy?

A bone marrow biopsy is a procedure where a needle is inserted into the bone and a sample of tissue (bone marrow) is taken. Bone marrow is the spongy tissue inside bones. It helps produce blood cells.

A bone marrow biopsy may involve two steps:

- Aspiration: removing fluid from the bone marrow
- Biopsy: removing a tiny piece of bone and bone marrow tissue

Why is a bone marrow biopsy done?

A bone marrow biopsy may be done to:

- Determine the cause of abnormal blood cells that are too high or too low
- Diagnose a disease or condition involving the bone marrow or blood cells
- Diagnose blood or bone marrow cancers
- Determine if a disease has progressed
- Monitor the effects of treatment

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure takes about 30 minutes:

- Usually the hip area is used. You will be positioned on your side or on your abdomen.
- The back area of your hip is cleansed with an antiseptic solution.
- A local anesthetic is injected to numb the puncture site before the needle is inserted. You will feel a stinging sensation and then numbness.
- A biopsy needle is inserted into the bone marrow. You will feel pressure that may cause a brief sharp pain.

- A small amount of fluid and a tiny piece of bone/bone marrow tissue is removed.
- The needle is removed and pressure is applied to the area for 5 to 10 minutes or until bleeding stops.
- A sterile dressing is applied over the site.
- Your doctor will likely instruct you to lay flat for a period of time following the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?

- You may have some tenderness and bruising at the biopsy site. Ask your doctor about taking a pain reliever.
- If you have had a sedative you will feel drowsy and will need someone to drive you home.
- Remove the dressing 24 hours after the procedure and then you can shower or bathe.
- Follow your doctor's instructions. Your doctor may have asked you to stop taking certain medications. NEVER stop taking a medication unless directed by your doctor.
- You can resume your normal activity.

Call your healthcare provider or go to the nearest emergency department if you have any of the following for 48 hours after your biopsy:

- Fever (temperature greater than 38°C or 100.4°F)
- Redness, swelling or any discharge from the biopsy site
- Worsening pain or discomfort
- Excessive bleeding from your biopsy site that cannot be controlled by pressure within 15 minutes

