About Your Bone Marrow Biopsy

What is a bone marrow biopsy?

Bone marrow is the soft tissue in the cavities of the bones and makes all types of blood cells. A bone marrow biopsy is a procedure that uses a special needle to get a sample of bone and bone marrow for testing. The site used to get the bone marrow is the right or left hip area.

How do I prepare for the biopsy?

• Before your biopsy, please tell your doctor if you have any allergies or take any blood thinning medication such as Coumadin, warfarin, Plavix or aspirin. Your doctor will tell you when to stop and restart your blood thinners.
• Do not eat or drink anything before your test, as instructed by your doctor. You can take your usual medications (except blood thinners) with a small sip of water before the test.
• You need to arrange to have someone drive you home after your biopsy.

What happens during the procedure?

• Blood samples will be drawn from your arm right before your bone marrow biopsy to compare the cells in the bloodstream to those in the bone marrow.
• A local anesthetic will be used to numb the area that will be used for the biopsy. You may also be given medication to help you relax through an intravenous (IV) line during the procedure.
• The nurses will monitor your blood pressure and pulse during the procedure. You may also be given oxygen to breathe during the test because of the relaxing medication.
• Depending on your doctor and what you can tolerate, you will be asked to lie on your stomach or right or left side (with your legs bent) for the procedure.
• You will need to stay for 30 to 60 minutes after the procedure, lying flat on your back.
• Ice may be applied to your biopsy site for comfort.

What happens after the procedure?

• If you were given sedation medication, you should not drive, operate heavy or potentially harmful equipment, make important legal decisions, or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
• You should avoid heavy lifting or straining for 48 hours.
• Leave the bandage on until the next morning or longer, as instructed by your doctor.
• You should change your band-aid daily until your site is completely healed (clean and dry).
• If you have steri-strips (long, skinny bandage) over your biopsy site, do not remove them. Let them fall off on their own.
• You may take a shower the day after your biopsy if the bandage is clean and dry.
• You may take a bath starting 48 hours after your biopsy.

Results

• The results of your biopsy may take 10 to 14 days and will be discussed at your next doctor’s visit.

Pain

• You may have some tenderness around the site of your biopsy for 12 to 48 hours.
• Apply ice to the site as needed for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for comfort.
• You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain.
• Do not take any medication that contains aspirin or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) for 48 hours.

Call your doctor if any of the following occurs

• If you have pain that is not relieved by pain medication.
• You have signs of an infection, such as a temperature over 100.5°F, drainage, redness or swelling around the biopsy site.
• You have active bleeding that does not stop after applying pressure to the area for 15 minutes.
• You have numbness or tingling in the leg or foot on the side of the procedure.
• You have any problems that require medical attention.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.