

# Endometrial pipelle biopsy

Information and advice for patients

## Gynaecology

### What is an endometrial pipelle biopsy?

This is a name of the procedure which takes a small sample of tissue from the lining of the womb (endometrium). This sample is then sent off to the laboratory to check if you have any cancer or other abnormal cells in the lining of your womb.

### The biopsy may give answers to:

- Why you are having abnormal vaginal bleeding (heavy, prolonged or irregular periods, or bleeding in between periods).
- Why you are having some bleeding after the menopause.
- Why an ultra sound scan shows you have a thickened lining of your womb.

If you need to have the biopsy taken it will be as part of your outpatient appointment with either a doctor or a nurse.

### Who is the biopsy not suitable for?

The biopsy is not suitable for you if you:

- are pregnant
- have an infection in the vagina or pelvis

### What is the benefit?

The benefit of having the biopsy taken is to check for any abnormal cells or signs of cancer so that treatment can be offered for your condition.

### What are the risks?

The procedure is generally very safe. You may experience period type pain during the procedure. Very occasionally you may need some simple painkillers like paracetamol after the biopsy, but most women feel a little discomfort for only a short time whilst the biopsy is being taken.

In rare cases, patients may be at risk of:

- Prolonged bleeding
- Infection
- Uterine perforation (making a hole in the womb) but this is extremely rare as the device used is malleable and not a metal one.
- Feeling faint

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### What are the risks of not having the biopsy?

If you do not have the biopsy, then we cannot check for any abnormal cells or signs of cancer. Sometimes it can be difficult to get the biopsy, especially if you haven't had any children or have had treatment in the past to your cervix – in this case we may have to consider taking you to theatre and giving you a general anaesthetic so that we can get a biopsy. If this was the case it would be arranged to take place on a different date after your outpatient appointment. As an alternative you may be suitable for an outpatient hysteroscopy. These options will be discussed in more detail with you at the end of your appointment.

### Preparing for the biopsy

You don't need to do anything in preparation for your Pipelle biopsy. You are still able to have the procedure carried out if you are on your period or experiencing some postmenopausal bleeding.

### During the biopsy

- As part of your outpatient appointment with the doctor or nurse they will decide after asking you some questions if you need to have the biopsy taken.
- If you need to have the biopsy taken, it will be taken as part of the examination that the doctor or nurse will carry out.
- The doctor or nurse will explain to you what examinations they are going to do and ask if you are happy to have the biopsy taken.
- The chaperone nurse who is also in the room will help you get undressed and help you get positioned on the examination couch where you will be lying down for the examination. This nurse will be with you throughout the examination and procedure.
- The doctor or nurse will then explain that they are about to start the examination and talk you through the procedure.
- Firstly they will insert a speculum into the vagina which is an instrument used to open the vagina – similar to when you have a smear test taken. This enables the doctor or nurse to examine the walls of the vagina and cervix to see if they appear healthy.
- The doctor or nurse will then explain that they are about to take the Pipelle biopsy by passing a thin plastic straw through the cervix then into the womb. The biopsy is obtained by slight suction as the inside of the straw is pulled out causing the suction. This part of the procedure can cause the crampy period type pain that is often experienced. This pain generally settles once the procedure is finished, but a few women may feel like they want some simple pain killers.

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- Sometimes the procedure to take the biopsy is carried out more than once – this is to ensure a good amount of tissue is obtained to send to the laboratory to be tested.
- Occasionally the position of the cervix is at an angle – which is completely normal, but this can make it a bit difficult for taking the biopsy. If this is the case sometimes an instrument might be used to hold onto your cervix enabling it to be held in a better position to make it easier to take the biopsy.
- After taking the Pipelle biopsy, the speculum will then be removed.
- The nurse will then help you to get off the examination couch and will help you to get dressed if you need assistance.

The biopsy sample will then be sent off to the laboratory to be examined and tested.

### After the biopsy

If you experience any tummy discomfort after the biopsy has been taken, you can take some Paracetamol or Ibuprofen that you may have at home.

Once you are dressed you can then leave the clinic appointment and carry on with whatever you have planned for the rest of the day. You are able to go to work if you are feeling well and are also able to drive after the procedure.

You may experience some vaginal bleeding for the next day or so after having the biopsy taken and this is completely normal. It is advisable to wear a sanitary towel just in case this happens and the nurse will offer you a sanitary towel when you are getting dressed after having the biopsy taken.

You can continue with normal activities such as having a bath or shower, exercise and driving.

We recommend that you do not have sex until the bleeding has stopped completely.

### How do I get the results?

Your biopsy sample is sent to the Pathology department for testing. We will write to you and your GP with the results. It could take between one to four weeks before you receive the letter with the results.

If you require further treatment or a follow-up appointment, we will send you an appointment letter with the date and time to attend the Gynaecology Outpatient Clinic.

In some cases, we may call instead of writing a letter.

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### Symptoms to report

If you start experiencing some heavy vaginal bleeding, especially associated with some offensive smelling discharge then we advise you to contact your GP as you may have an infection and need some medication.

### Contact details

If you have any concerns or in case of emergency, please contact the EGAU on the following number: Tel: 0121 507 4925

### Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Demirkiran, F., Yavuz, E., et al. (2012). Which is the best technique for endometrial sampling? Aspiration (pipelle) versus dilatation and curettage (D&C). *Archives of gynecology and obstetrics*, 286(5), 1277-1282.
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