Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA)

Your doctor has ordered a fine needle aspiration. Our staff will be contacting you by phone to schedule your appointment at the

Head & Neck Oncology Clinic
Stanford Blake Wilbur Building
900 Blake Wilbur Drive, 3rd Floor
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Parking
Scan the QR code or click the below link for parking information. Please allow extra time for parking.

Blake Wilbur Surface Lot | Stanford Medicine Transportation

What is a fine needle aspiration (FNA)?

A fine needle aspiration (FNA) uses a very thin needle (similar to needles used to draw blood for lab tests) to collect a small sample of cells from a lump or mass. The procedure will be performed by a pathologist who has received special training to perform this procedure.

What to expect

- The pathologist will make sure you are in a comfortable position before starting the procedure.
- Local anesthesia (numbing medicine given by a needle) may be used to reduce discomfort. This is optional.
- If the mass can be felt, the cytopathologist may use his/her fingers to hold the mass in place while moving a thin needle back and forth several times. This will draw a few drops of tissue into the needle for testing.
- If the mass is difficult to feel, an ultrasound device may be used to locate the mass and help guide the needle into the proper position.
- Pressure will be applied to the area after the needle is removed.
- The pathologist will look at your sample under a microscope to see if there is enough material.

Who performs it

Your FNA will be performed by the Cytopathology team. Your team includes a cytopathologist, a doctor who studies cell samples under a microscope, and a sub-specialty fellow, who is a doctor completing additional training in this area of expertise.

Beforehand

- Eat meals and take all medications on your normal schedule.
- Tell your care team if you are taking any blood thinners. It is safe to have an FNA, but the doctor will hold extra pressure on the site afterwards.
- Tell your doctor if you've had a reaction to a local anesthetic before.

Afterwards

- Pain medication is usually not necessary, but if desired, you can take over-the-counter pain medication (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen). Check with your primary care provider if you are unsure which over-the-counter pain medicines are safe for you.
- You can resume your daily activities (eating, drinking, showering, etc.) immediately after the procedure.
- Please wait until the following day to do any strenuous exercise (e.g., weight lifting).