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ST JOHN OF GOD  
Geelong Hospital

## Your care guidelines for your Bone Marrow Biopsy

### PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Your doctor has requested that you have a bone marrow biopsy to obtain a sample of bone (biopsy) and marrow (fluid removal / aspiration) for examination and testing.

**Bone marrow** is the spongy tissue and fluid inside some of the larger bones in your body where blood cells are made.

Bone marrow samples are usually taken from the pelvis bones (iliac crest). These are the bones that you can feel in your lower back, just below each side of your waist. Occasionally, other areas are used, such as the sternum (breastbone).

#### Before the Procedure

If you are having sedation:

- You are required to fast before having the procedure
- No solid food is to be eaten for 4 hours before the biopsy
- No liquid is to be drunk for 2 hours before the biopsy

If you take medications that affect blood clotting, such as aspirin or warfarin, you may be advised to stop taking these, or to reduce the dose, for one week before the test. Please discuss your medication with your referring doctor if you take such medicines.

- If you are very concerned about the pain, the biopsy can be performed using a sedative drug administered through a vein so that you're partially or completely sedated during the procedure. This is done in the day-surgery department only and requires a half-day admission. There are some possible risks of intravenous sedation so must be discussed with your referring doctor first to determine if appropriate for you.

#### How is the Procedure Done?

The bone marrow biopsy procedure usually takes about 20 - 30 minutes but extra time is needed for preparation beforehand and observation afterwards.

- During the procedure you will need to lie on your side, with your knees drawn up to your front. The skin over the area is cleaned with antiseptic. Local anaesthetic is then injected into the skin over the bone. This stings a little at first, but then makes the skin numb.
- The doctor makes a small cut in the numbed skin to insert a hollow needle through the bone and into the bone marrow. A sample of bone marrow is then collected. You may feel pressure, discomfort or brief sharp pain as the sample is withdrawn. The aspiration takes only a few seconds. The doctor will then check the sample and occasionally, may need to get another sample.
- Once the marrow sample has been collected, a sample of bone is taken. This involves some pushing and twisting that may cause some dull pain for a moment. The needle is then taken out and pressure applied to prevent bleeding.



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### After the Procedure

After the procedure, a water-proof dressing is put on and you will be asked to lie on your back for 10 to 15 minutes to apply pressure to the biopsy site.

Keep the waterproof dressing on and dry for 24 to 48 hours. Shower lightly only, to avoid getting the dressing too wet. You may remove the dressing after 1 to 2 days if there has been no further bleeding.

If bleeding soaks through the dressing, apply pressure to the area by lying on a rolled up towel until the bleeding stops. If it doesn't stop or if it starts again, contact your local doctor or the emergency department for review.

Also contact your local doctor or the emergency department if you experience:

- A persistent fever
- Worsening pain or discomfort at the procedure site
- Swelling at the procedure site
- Increasing redness or drainage at the procedure site

Although you can often return to your normal activities after a bone marrow biopsy, avoid rigorous activity or exercise for a day or two to help minimise bleeding and discomfort.

You may feel some tenderness or dull soreness for a few days after the local anaesthetic wears off, which you can ease by taking painkillers. People feel the pain following the procedure differently so ask the doctor doing the procedure about taking a pain reliever. There may also be some bruising at the site.

- **If you used the inhaler:** you will need to stay for observation until you're feeling alert and able to leave. You should not drive or operate any machinery that needs your careful attention until you have completely recovered from the effects of the inhaler. And it is preferable for someone to drive you home.
- **If you had IV sedation:** you'll need to stay for observation until you're alert and able to leave. Because the sedative may cause impaired judgment, memory lapses or slowed response times:
  - Someone must drive you home.
  - You must not drive or operate any machinery that needs your careful attention for the rest of the day.
  - If you live alone, is it preferable for someone to stay with you for the next 24 hours.

You will be given instruction by the staff before discharge.

### What are the possible risks?

Complications are very uncommon. In a very small number of cases, there is some bleeding from the biopsy site. This is usually minor, and usually stops when pressure is applied to the site. Rarely, the bleeding is more severe and may require medical treatment. There is a small risk that the wound may become infected after the biopsy. Rarely, the biopsy needle may cause local tissue or nerve damage. Rare complications that may be specific to your condition will be discussed with you by your doctor and / or the doctor performing the procedure.



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**Who do I call?**

If you have any concerns following your bone marrow biopsy please call your local doctor or:

**Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 5.00pm**

Oncology Centre

03 5215 8774

03 5226 8813

**Out of hours**

SJG Geelong

03 5226 8800

SJG Geelong - Emergency Department

03 5226 8811

**Your notes**

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