

# Returning home after a breast biopsy



You've just had a breast biopsy. This health sheet explains what precautions you should take, what you can do to relieve the pain, and symptoms to look out for.

## What discomfort might I feel in the next few days?

At the biopsy site, you might have:

- tenderness or pain
- tingling
- a small bump
- a bruise, as some blood may have accumulated under the skin

Some of these discomforts could last several days, or even up to 2 weeks.

It's also normal to see blood on your bandage. It's nothing to be worried about.

## What can I do to relieve the pain?

To ease the pain, you can:

- Take acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol), up to two 325 mg tablets or one 500 mg tablet every 4 or 6 hours.

**Attention.** Don't take this dose for more than 5 days.

**Don't take anti-inflammatory medications (e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen) for 24 hours after the biopsy.** These medications increase the risk of bleeding.

- **The day of the biopsy, put ice on the sensitive area for 10 or 15 minutes every hour.** In the following days, apply warm compresses.

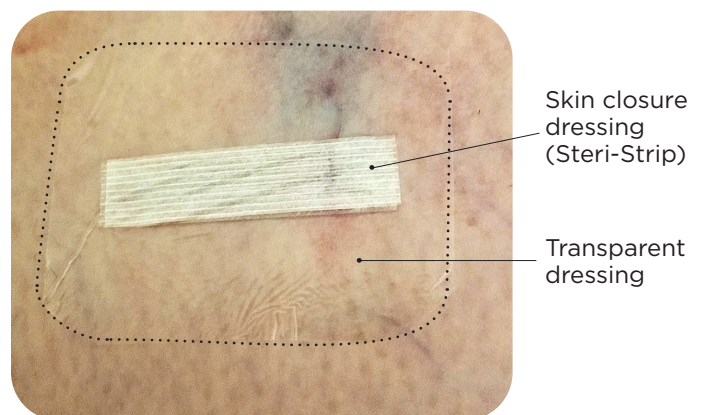
Tips:

- put ice cubes in a bag or use a package of frozen vegetables (e.g., peas or corn)
- always place a damp towel between the bag and your breast, so as not to freeze your skin

## How long should I keep my dressings on?

**The transparent dressing and the skin closure dressing (Steri-Strip) should stay on for 5 days.**

If you have a white bandage covering them, keep that on until the next day.



The transparent dressing can be removed before 5 days if:

- it comes unglued
- it causes discomfort, for example, if your skin reacts and you scratch the itch

In that case, replace it with a small adhesive bandage (diachylon) bought from a pharmacy. However, it's important to keep the skin closure bandage in place (it may fall off after a few days).

After 5 days you can remove the bandages yourself.

## Are there precautions I should take?

Yes. **For 2 days** (48 hours) after the biopsy:

- Don't get your dressings wet. This could lead to infections. You can take a bath, wetting only the lower part of your body, but not a shower.
- Don't do any exercises that strain the arms (e.g., cycling, tennis, aerobics, golf, skiing). You can, however, continue with your everyday activities. Then start exercising again as you feel comfortable.



For as long as your incision isn't healed (about 1 week):

- Don't go to a pool, a lake, or a spa.

A small 2 mm metal marker may have been placed in your breast. This is used to mark the tissue where the biopsy was taken, for follow-up. Made of titanium, it's inert and can remain in place for life without any risk. It won't cause any problems in airport metal detectors.

*The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.*

## What symptoms should I watch for?

- Bleeding of the incision that won't stop.
- Pain not relieved by medication.
- Fever of 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.



If you have any of these symptoms, call a nurse at the **CHUM Patient Health Line**:

☎ **514 890-8086**

This support service is available 7 days/week, 24 hours/day. When calling, be sure to have your RAMQ health insurance card on hand.

## What will the follow-up be?

The tissue removed during the biopsy will be analyzed. Your doctor will receive the results within 2 to 3 weeks. To get the results, make an appointment with your doctor.

## Who can I contact if I have questions?

For all non-urgent questions, you can call the Radiology Department, Monday to Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.:

☎ **514 890-8450**



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.

[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
**chumontreal.qc.ca**