



Patient information: The Breast Health Practice

This information is designed to help you understand more about what will happen before, during and after your appointment at The Breast Health Practice at a GenesisCare centre.

Before your appointment

Please complete any paperwork you have been given if possible before your appointment; bring it with you and hand it to the receptionist on arrival.

GenesisCare provides private care and treatment. If you are planning to use your insurance to pay for your visit, remember that your insurer usually requires you to pre-authorise any consultations, tests or treatments.

We would advise that you contact your insurer ahead of your visit. Please be aware that GenesisCare may be registered with your insurer as Cancer Partners.

If you intend to self-pay, we would be happy to discuss your options. Please contact us if you have any questions.

What to expect

You should allow between 1-2 hours for your initial appointment. The length will depend on the diagnostic tests your consultant recommends in order to give a full diagnosis.

Please be assured that there will be a nurse with you throughout your visit and you can discuss any questions or concerns with them. There will also be a nurse with you during any examinations and/or tests that your consultant recommends.

Preparing for your appointment

To prepare for your appointment, we would recommend that you do not use any spray-on deodorant, talcum powder, anti-perspirant or perfume on your breast area; as they may affect the results of any tests that your consultant may recommend you have, whilst you are at the centre.

Arriving for your appointment

When you arrive at the GenesisCare centre, please check-in at the main reception area.

Your consultation

During your consultation, the consultant will discuss your referral and may wish to undertake a physical examination. If so, you will be asked to remove your upper body clothing including your bra. The consultant will examine both breasts and armpits.

Following this, they may recommend diagnostic tests for example a mammogram or ultrasound scan, a soft tissue or needle biopsy. Not everyone will require a mammogram as your consultant may recommend an ultrasound in the first instance.

These tests can be usually be undertaken while you are at the GenesisCare centre.

If any of these tests are required, you will be asked to undress and change into a gown and robe. This makes it easier to complete the tests swiftly.

Having a mammogram

Mammograms are taken using an x-ray machine called a mammogram unit.

You will be asked to undress to the waist and the radiographer will assist you to position your breast on a flat plate on the mammography unit. It is normal practice to scan both breasts, one at a time. There will be another plate positioned above your breast which will move down and your breast will be pressed in between in order to keep your breast still and allow a clear image to be taken. This may feel uncomfortable.

A mammogram will usually take between 10-15 minutes. Most of this time is spent getting into position and preparing the equipment. The actual x-ray only takes a few seconds and the radiographer will operate the mammography unit from behind a screen. The radiographer will be able to see and hear you at all times. Once completed, you will be asked to wait while the images are processed.

The images will be seen immediately by the radiologist who will discuss the results with you. The majority of abnormalities are due to be benign conditions, not cancer.

Following a mammogram some women may need further assessment. The aim is to clearly distinguish between those abnormalities which are benign and harmless; and those which may need further treatment.

Further assessment may include:

- An additional mammogram or ultrasound scan;
- Or in some cases a sample of tissue may be taken (known as a biopsy), normally under local anaesthetic using a small needle.

Having an ultrasound scan

An ultrasound scan is a painless and non-invasive procedure using sound waves to form images of your anatomy. You may be more familiar with ultrasound as the type of scanning technique that is used to routinely on pregnant women to check on the progress of a pregnancy.

To perform an ultrasound scan, your consultant will apply some gel on the relevant part of your skin and gently move a handheld scanner across the area to produce an image on a computer screen. You will feel no discomfort but the gel may feel a little cold when it is applied.

Having a biopsy

An ultrasound guided breast biopsy can be performed when a breast ultrasound or mammogram shows an abnormality such as:

- A suspicious solid mass;
- A distortion in the structure of the breast tissue;
- An area of abnormal tissue change.

There are times when your consultant may decide that ultrasound guidance for biopsy is appropriate even for a mass that can be felt.

Ultrasound guidance is used in two biopsy procedures:

- Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA), which uses a very small needle to extract fluid or cells from the abnormal area.
- Core Needle (CN) which uses a large hollow needle to remove one sample of breast tissue per insertion.

All of this will be fully explained to you at the time and you will be asked for your consent before any further procedures are carried out.

Your biopsy will need to be sent off to be analysed so you will not receive these results during your visit to the clinic.

After your appointment

We will discuss the next steps with you and if required, you will be able to arrange any further follow up consultations or recommended tests.

Bringing someone with you

You are welcome to have someone accompany you for your appointments. It is your choice whether they are present during your consultation; and the medical team will advise whether they are able to be present during any diagnostic tests other than your mammogram. Unfortunately they are unable to be present during a mammogram, however a nurse and your consultant will be present at all times.

GenesisCare 

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