



**East Suffolk and  
North Essex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Rapid Diagnostic Clinic**

***Colchester Breast Unit  
Colchester Hospital  
Tel: 01206 748381***

(DPS: 02355-22)



## **The Rapid Diagnostic Breast Clinic**

You have been offered an appointment for the breast clinic at Colchester Hospital. This is a rapid diagnostic clinic, so breast examination and other breast tests are carried out, as required. **You may find it helpful to bring a friend or relative with you to lessen the anxiety associated with attending clinics or receiving results.**

The majority of patients (90%) can be reassured that their breast problem is not serious and will be discharged back to the care of their GP.

### **Who will be in the breast clinic?**

The clinic is run by the consultant breast surgeons. Nursing staff and the breast care nurses are also there for help.

Medical/nursing students or GP trainees may also be present. If you have any objections, please tell us.

You may also meet the radiographers who take the mammograms, the consultant breast radiologists and staff from the Breast Screening and X-ray departments.

### **The tests**

The tests include a clinical examination. You may also have a mammogram, X-ray, and/or ultrasound scan, a core biopsy or cell test. The clinical examination, scans and biopsies are called a 'triple assessment' and provide an accurate diagnosis for more than 99% of all breast problems. Very occasionally, further tests will be needed before a diagnosis can be made. If they are necessary they will be discussed with you beforehand.



# What happens in the breast clinic?

## Breast examination

This will be performed by the breast doctor, the consultant breast surgeon or a member of their team. Any further tests will be arranged at that point and are described as follows:

## Mammograms (breast X-rays) and ultrasound

- Mammograms are generally offered to women over the age of 40. Younger women tend to have more glandular breast tissue, which makes mammograms less clear.
- Women under 40 have their breasts examined by ultrasound if a scan is required.

Mammograms involve compressing the breast in the X-ray machine for a few seconds. For the majority of women it is slightly uncomfortable rather than painful. Ultrasound involves spreading a jelly on the breast and passing a small scanning device over the breast. This is painless.

Mammograms are performed by the breast radiographers and interpreted (read) by a consultant breast radiologist or clinical specialist. Further mammogram pictures may be required to help with interpretation – this does not necessarily mean there is something of concern on the mammogram. An ultrasound scan may be performed, which is helpful in examining certain parts of the breast in more detail.

## **The cell test (fine needle aspiration and cytology)**

A fine needle is inserted into the breast and fluid or cells are removed. A cell test is very similar to a blood test. This test is also occasionally done on a lymph node in the armpit. Any cells removed are sent for examination to the consultant pathologist in the laboratory. Whoever does this test will let you know if the cells are being sent for analysis. Occasionally it can result in bruising, which will normally get better over 2–4 weeks. Other complications are very rare.

## **Cyst aspiration**

If you have a cyst, removing fluid may help to make you feel more comfortable. Cysts do not always need to be drained, however. Draining a cyst will be discussed with you and is also performed using a fine needle. Cyst fluid does not usually require analysis.

## **Core biopsy**

A core biopsy is the removal of a small sample of tissue. Before the procedure a local anaesthetic is injected, which may sting for a short time initially. The core biopsy is taken using a special needle.

The tissue is then sent to the Histopathology Department for further examination. There may be some bruising, which will normally get better over 2–4 weeks. Other complications are very rare. A small dressing will be applied. If you experience any discomfort following the procedure, you can take a mild pain reliever such as paracetamol but avoid aspirin as this can encourage bleeding.



## **The results**

Core biopsy and cell test results will usually be available the following week but occasionally may take 10–14 days.

## **Important additional instructions**

Please wear clothes that you can remove quickly and easily, so nothing too tight, not a dress or any clothes with several buttons or clasps. Please do not wear spray deodorant or talc because it affects the quality of breast X-rays.

## **Refreshments**

The Colchester League of Hospital Friends sells light refreshments in the Outpatient Department.

## **Parking/Travel**

### **Coming to the hospital – by car**

Please allow adequate time so that you and anyone with you can arrive together, unflustered, in time for your appointment. A ticket system is in operation, so please bring change for the machine.

### **Coming to the hospital – by train or bus**

The nearest train station is Colchester Main Station which is less than one mile away from Colchester Hospital. There is a frequent bus service from the station to the hospital.

Buses Traveline: **0871 200 22 33**.

'Colchester Park and Ride' is located opposite Weston Homes Stadium (J28 of the A12) and the buses stop outside the back of the hospital. They run from 7 am, Monday to Saturday.

For more information: [www.essexhighways.org](http://www.essexhighways.org) or call **0345 743 0430**.



## **Further information**

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the breast care nurses on 01206 748370.

## **Verifying your identity**

When you attend hospital you will be asked to confirm your first and last names, date of birth, postcode and NHS number, if you know it, and to let us know if you have any allergies.

## **Your experience matters**

We value your feedback. Please help us improve our services by answering a simple question, in our online survey – “Overall, how was your experience of our services?”

This survey is known as “The Friends and Family Test”.

You can either scan this QR code with a smart phone camera:



Or type the following web address into your browser:  
[www.esneft.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views-matter/friends-and-family-test/](http://www.esneft.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views-matter/friends-and-family-test/)

Thank you very much.



Please ask if you need this leaflet  
in an alternative format.

Issued by:  
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[www.esneft.nhs.uk](http://www.esneft.nhs.uk)



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