

the london  
sarcoma service

# A Patient's Guide to Undergoing Investigations for a Bone or Soft Tissue Tumour

**RNOH Stanmore**  
**Tel: 020 8954 2300**

إذا احتجت إلى ترجمة لهذا المستند، يرجى الاتصال بقسم الإدارة  
الكلينيكية Clinical Governance Department على الهاتف  
رقم ٠٢٠ ٨٩٠٩ ٥٦٢٨

Eğer size bu dokümanın tercümesi gerekirse  
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# Contents

<b>Why are investigations needed?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Plain X-Rays</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ultrasound Scan</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CT (Computerised Tomography)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Biopsy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Bone Scan</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Measurement Films</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Waiting for Results</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Information and Support</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Your Notes</b>	<b>8</b>

## Why are investigations needed?

You have been asked to undergo a number of tests because you have a growth (tumour) that needs investigating. These investigations are necessary for us to:

1. Establish the type, position and extent of tumour
2. Decide on a course of treatment

You may have any of the following investigations.

### Plain X-Rays

This is perhaps the most common procedure performed. It will give the doctors useful images of the tumour. Radiation does carry a small risk, so we exercise strict protocols for your protection. Please inform the radiographer if you think you may be pregnant.

It is usually quite a simple procedure. You will be asked to sit or lie on the X-Ray couch, whilst part of your body is placed on an X-Ray plate. The plate is often cold but shouldn't be uncomfortable. The radiographer will then leave the room, and the X-Ray will be performed. The whole procedure takes about half an hour.

### Ultrasound Scan

Ultrasound scans use sound waves, which are converted by a computer to produce pictures of soft tissues. It will be performed while you are lying on a couch. A jelly-like substance is squeezed onto the part of the body to be scanned. A small hand-held ultrasound probe is then moved across your skin. The test only lasts a few minutes and is painless.

## MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

Even though you may have had an MRI recently we may need to repeat the scan to obtain more information. This scan uses magnetism to show us exactly where the tumour is, and what anatomical structures are involved (e.g. muscle, nerves and blood vessels). Because of this, all metal objects should be removed from your body prior to the scan.

To have the scan, you will need to lie still on the machine couch. You are then moved into the middle of a magnetic cylinder and different sequences (and noises) are applied. The procedure can take up to an hour, and is completely painless but rather noisy, you are welcome to bring some music CDs to listen to during the scan. If your tumour is painful, you may take painkillers beforehand.

## CT (Computerised Tomography)

This scan uses X-Rays to take pictures of your body from different angles. A computer then puts these pictures together to give a series of cross sections or 'slices'. You may have a CT scan of your chest to check for abnormalities. This is because these types of tumours can also show in your lungs, if they have spread.

A CT scanner is a large machine shaped rather like a doughnut. You will be asked to lie on a couch that slides forwards and backwards through the scanner, whilst pictures are taken. At some point during the scan you may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds. This scan takes about half an hour.

## Biopsy

A biopsy involves taking a piece of tissue from the tumour and then examining it under a microscope. This is to determine whether the tumour is malignant (cancerous) or not.

A radiologist (doctor) will perform your biopsy while you are lying on an X-Ray couch. The tissue will be removed using a special needle, guided by ultrasound or a CT scanner. Local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area first. Young people will have the biopsy under general anaesthetic. This procedure can take up to an hour. It is normal for there to be some swelling and discomfort after a biopsy. There is also a small chance of infection so you will be advised how to take care of the biopsy site afterwards. Please tell the doctor if you are taking aspirin or warfarin (drugs to thin your blood).

## Bone Scan

A bone scan enables us to check the rest of your body for bone abnormalities. If your tumour only involves soft tissue you may not have this scan.

You will begin by having a radioactive substance injected into your vein, which travels through the blood and collects in your bones. You only need a small amount of this radioactive substance - not enough to do you any harm. After the injection, you will be asked to drink plenty of fluids and asked to keep emptying your bladder. After three hours, you will be asked to lie on an X-Ray couch for the scan. A camera will then take pictures of the whole of your skeleton. The actual scan takes about 45 minutes.

## Measurement Films

It may be necessary to remove part of your bone along with the tumour, during your operation. If this is the case, it MAY be replaced with an internal prosthetic (artificial) bone or joint. This prosthesis will be custom made to fit you.

In order for the prosthesis to be made, accurate measurements are needed of your bones. This is achieved through a series of X-Rays called 'measurement films'. The films are taken in the X-Ray department, and can take up to half an hour.

## Waiting for results

The results of your tests can take up to two weeks to come through. When they are ready we will contact you by telephone. An appointment will be made for you to come and discuss your results with your doctor. A plan of treatment will then be decided.

We understand that waiting for results can be an anxious time, so feel free to get in touch with one of the specialist nurses if you need to.

# Information and Support

## **Macmillan Cancer Support**

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Cancerline: 0808 808 2020

## **Cancerbackup**

[www.cancerbackup.org.uk](http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk)

helpline: 0808 800 1234

## **click4tic**

[www.click4tic.org.uk](http://www.click4tic.org.uk)

teen info on cancer

## **Cancerhelp**

Patient information website for Cancer Research UK

[www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)

## **The Royal College of Radiologists**

Information about tests and treatments

[www.goingfora.co](http://www.goingfora.co).

## **Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital**

[www.rnoh.nhs.uk](http://www.rnoh.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 0208 954 2300

## **University College London Hospital**

[www.uclh.nhs.uk](http://www.uclh.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 0845 155 5000

## **The London Sarcoma Service**

[www.londonsarcoma.org](http://www.londonsarcoma.org)

## Your Notes ...



<b>GP Surgery:</b>	
<b>Consultant:</b>	
<b>District Nurse:</b>	
<b>Named Nurse:</b>	
<b>Physiotherapist:</b>	
<b>Occupational Therapist:</b>	
<b>Social Worker:</b>	
<b>Key Worker:</b>	
<b>Clinical Nurse Specialist:</b>	

Please note that this is an advisory leaflet only.  
Your experiences may differ from those described.

If you have any comments regarding this leaflet please contact:  
Clinical Governance Department on 020 8909 5339.

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