Breast Needle Localization

This information explains your breast needle localization procedure at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK).

Breast needle localization is a procedure done to find exactly where your abnormal breast tissue is and mark its location. This will help your doctor locate the area easily during your surgery.

The Day of Your Procedure

- Don’t put anything on your breasts, nipples, or under your arms on the day of the procedure. This includes talcum powder, deodorant, perfumes, colognes, and creams.
- Wear a shirt that you can easily remove.
- Follow any additional instructions your doctor or nurse give you.

During Your Procedure

Your breast needle localization procedure will be done during a mammogram while your breast is compressed. If your doctor can’t see the abnormal tissue on the mammogram, you may have an ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) instead.
Once the abnormal tissue is found, your radiologist will give you an injection (shot) of local anesthetic (medication to make an area numb) into the area.

After the area is numb, your radiologist will insert a needle with a thin wire into your breast. They will take a series of images of your breast using a mammogram to make sure the needle is in the correct position. The needle will then be removed and the wire will stay in your breast. You will have another set of images taken to show the exact location of the wire.

The wire will be covered with a piece of gauze and taped to your skin. Your surgeon will use the wire to find the abnormal breast tissue during your surgery.

After Your Procedure

After your breast needle localization, you will be taken from the Breast Imaging Department in Radiology to your next appointment.
If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.