

## Contact details

### Haematology Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital  
Guildford  
GU2 7XX

**Telephone:** 01483 464122

### Haematology Secretaries

**Telephone:** 01483 571122 ext 4488 / 4489

### PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm  
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Author: Dr E Grey-Davies  
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Patient information leaflet

## Examination of bone marrow



## Haematology Department

Examination of the bone marrow may be helpful in the investigation of a wide variety of blood conditions such as anaemia and clotting disorders, in the initial assessment of some lymph gland disorders and to investigate the significance of extra proteins appearing in the blood. Your doctor will tell you why a bone marrow examination is necessary in your case.

The sample is usually taken by a doctor or nurse specialising in disorders of the blood.

Bone marrow is normally taken from the front or back of the pelvis bone. The breast bone may be used if the pelvis is unsuitable. A local anaesthetic injection is used to numb the skin and surface of the bone; a general anaesthetic is not usually required except for babies and children. A specially designed needle is inserted through a small hole in the skin and tough outer layer of bone into the marrow. A few drops are removed with a syringe, causing a momentary feeling of pressure or discomfort. This part of the procedure is called 'aspiration'. Commonly a biopsy is also required and this involves inserting a different needle and removing a tiny core of bone. Again, some discomfort will be felt.

The whole procedure usually lasts no more than 30 minutes. A small waterproof sticking plaster will be placed over the biopsy area. This should be left in place for 48 hours. As the anaesthetic wears off, you may feel some soreness and tenderness which may last for a few days. Paracetamol can be taken for pain relief if required. If there are any other after effects please contact the Haematology Department for advice.

Biopsies take 14 days to process before they can be examined and a report issued to your doctor.

### **What are the benefits of bone marrow examination?**

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The procedure may be necessary to establish a diagnosis or the extent of your disease.

The information derived from it may be crucial in deciding what further investigations and treatment may be necessary (or avoided) in your case. A normal result may be useful in excluding bone marrow disease.

### **Are there any risks associated with bone marrow examination?**

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Most patients experience some discomfort or pain, but this is usually less than anticipated.

Uncommon side-effects include excessive bleeding or bruising, infection, allergic reactions.

Damage to internal organs including nerves is theoretically possible but extremely rare.

### **Are there any alternatives to undergoing a bone marrow examination?**

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There is no alternative procedure as this is the only way to accurately exam your bone marrow.

### **Practical points to remember**

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- you do not need to fast or omit any of your regular drugs, unless instructed to do so by your doctors but please bring a list of current drugs
- you should be able to drive before and after the procedure
- please inform the Haematology Department as soon as possible (well before your appointment) if you are taking Warfarin
- please tell the doctor doing the test if you have ever received radiotherapy
- wear light, loose clothes which give easy access to your pelvis
- inform the nurse if you are allergic to local anaesthetics, sticking plaster or iodine.

### **Reference**

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BJ Bain, Bone Marrow Aspiration.  
J Clin. Pathology 2001;54:657–663