

Diagnosing Soft Tissue Sarcoma - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing soft tissue sarcoma' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Tests for soft tissue sarcoma
- Further tests for soft tissue sarcoma
- What to ask your doctor

Tests for soft tissue sarcoma

Usually you begin by seeing your family doctor, who will examine you and ask about your general health. The doctor will feel the area where there is pain or swelling. It may feel tender, or it may be possible to feel a lump. Your doctor may need to refer you to hospital for tests and X-rays. Or you may be referred directly to a specialist.

At the hospital

If you see a specialist, you will be asked about your medical history and symptoms. The specialist will then examine you by feeling the area that is painful or swollen. You may be asked to have blood tests and a chest X-ray to check your general health.

You are most likely to be asked to have a core needle biopsy. This means taking a

sample of the lump to examine under the microscope.

Biopsies are usually done using a needle to remove some tissue from the lump. This is done under local anaesthetic. Sometimes a surgical biopsy is needed. This means using a surgical knife (scalpel) to open the area and remove a tissue sample from the lump. Or, if the lump is small enough, the whole of it may be removed. Depending on the scale of the biopsy operation, you may have this done under local or general anaesthetic.

Further tests for soft tissue sarcoma

If your tests show you have a sarcoma, you may have to have further tests to see if the cancer has spread. And to decide on the best treatment.

Scans

Your doctor may want to do a scan to get a better picture of your cancer, and to see if there are any signs that it has spread. You may have a CT scan, MRI scan, PET scan or an ultrasound scan.

Tests on cancer genes

Tests that look at the chromosomes and genes in the cancer cells are called cytogenetic tests. These tests are often



used if there is any doubt about the exact diagnosis. They can be useful for telling a Ewing's sarcoma from other types of sarcoma, for example small cell sarcomas. This is important because Ewing's sarcomas are treated differently from other types of sarcoma.

After your tests

You may feel very anxious while waiting for the results of your tests. It may help to talk to a friend or relative about how you are feeling. Or you may want to contact a cancer support group to talk to someone who has been through a similar experience.

What to ask your doctor about testing for soft tissue sarcomas

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are you looking for?
- Will the tests show whether I have cancer?
- Will the tests show whether my cancer can be operated on?
- Are any of the tests painful?
- Do any of the tests have after effects?
- Can I have these tests as an outpatient?
- Should I bring someone with me when I have the tests?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the test results?

More information

For more information about soft tissue sarcoma, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040**
9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

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