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FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATION BIOPSY (4/14)

What Is Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) Biopsy?
Fine needle aspiration is a technique that allows a biopsy of various bumps and lumps. It allows your otolaryngologist to retrieve enough tissue for microscopic analysis and thus make an accurate diagnosis of a number of problems, such as inflammation or even cancer.

Why Is It Important?
A mass or lump sometimes indicates a serious problem, such as a growth or cancer*. While this is not always the case, the presence of a mass may require FNA for diagnosis. Your age, sex and habits, such as smoking and drinking, are also important factors that help diagnosis of a mass. Symptoms of ear pain, increased difficulty swallowing, weight loss or a history of familial thyroid disorder or of previous skin cancer (squamous cell carcinoma) may be important as well.

**When found early, most cancers in the head and neck can be cured with relatively little difficulty. Cure rates for these cancers are greatly improved if people seek medical advice as soon as possible. So play it safe. If you have a lump in your head and neck area, see your doctor right away.*

FNA Is Used To Diagnose Masses In:

- Enlarged neck lymph nodes
- Parotid gland or other salivary glands
- Thyroid gland
- Neck cysts
- Inside the mouth
- Any lump that can be felt

How Is It Done?
The procedure generally does not require anesthesia, yet your doctor usually injects a small amount of local anesthetic into the skin. It is slightly more uncomfortable than drawing blood from the arm for laboratory testing. In fact, the needle used for FNA is smaller than that used for drawing blood. Although not painless, any discomfort associated with FNA is usually minimal.

Your doctor will insert a small needle into the mass. Negative pressure is created in the syringe, and as a result of this pressure difference between the syringe and the mass, cellular material can be drawn into the syringe. The needle is moved in a to-and-fro fashion, obtaining enough material to examine under a microscope and make a diagnosis. The procedure is usually repeated several times to insure adequate sampling of the lump. This procedure is quite accurate and frequently prevents the patient from having an open surgical biopsy, which is more painful and costly.

What Are The Complications Of This Procedure?
No medical procedure is without risks. Due to the small size of the needle, the chance of spreading a cancer or finding cancer in the needle path is very small. Other complications are rare; the most common is bleeding. If bleeding occurs at all, it is generally seen as a small bruise. Patients who take aspirin, Advil or blood thinners, such as Coumadin, are more at risk to bleed so it is best to stop these medications 7-10 days prior to the procedure. However, the risk is minimal. Infection is rarely seen.