Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Symptomatic Breast Clinic

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Symptomatic Breast Clinic

Patient Information

Surgical Breast Care Department

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Introduction

Your general practitioner (GP) has referred you for medical assessment at the Symptomatic Breast clinic. This clinic offers access to physicians, surgeons, radiologists, radiographers and breast nurse specialists, as well as imaging technologies, such as mammogram and ultrasound.

This service aims to efficiently diagnose breast diseases. However, not all the cases referred to this clinic are serious. In fact, in the majority of cases, our service rules out serious conditions and provides reassurance.

Before you attend

Your GP would have provided us with a referral, which would include your medical history; however, it is helpful if you could bring with you any recent lists of medications, and documentation of any assessments carried out previously (especially if these have been carried out in different parts of the country, overseas or in private clinics). It would also be helpful if you could obtain information about relatives who have suffered cancer in the past (especially breast and ovarian cancer).

What happens at your initial consultation?

You will be seen by a doctor who will review your medical history and examine you. Additionally, medical tests may be carried out to help obtain a diagnosis. If these investigations are carried out on the same day, the whole process may take up to four hours. If not, a separate appointment will be scheduled after your clinic visit. If you are unable or do not wish to carry out tests on the same day, please advise us as early as possible (ideally before the appointment).

If, on clinical assessment, the doctor feels that you are unlikely to have anything serious, they may decide to carry out your tests at a later date.

Mammogram

This is an X-ray machine which scans the entire breast and may pick up on changes which neither you nor your doctors can feel. This is performed by a radiographer in the Breast Screening Unit, and you may be asked to return to the clinic to wait for the results. **If you are pregnant or have breast implants, you must inform the doctors and the radiographer assessing you.**

Ultrasound

An ultrasound scan uses sound waves to provide a picture of the breast tissue, chest, or armpits. A jelly-like substance is smeared onto the area to be examined, and a small probe is placed over your skin, so that images can be seen on the monitor.

MRI

Magnetic Resonance imaging (MRI) is another tool to examine the breasts, but this is only carried out in specific cases. If required, this will be carried out at a later date.

Biopsies

If the doctor identifies an abnormality on examination, ultrasound scan or mammogram, a sample (biopsy) of your breast, skin, chest, or the lymph nodes in your armpit may be necessary. We use local anaesthetic injections to numb the area before sampling. **If you are on blood thinners, you must inform the healthcare professional taking the biopsy.**

What Happens Next?

If the scans are carried out on the day, we will provide you with the results from the mammography and ultrasound tests during the clinic appointment. If the tests are carried out at a later date, we will contact you with the result.

Biopsies need to be assessed under the microscope and are discussed at a weekly meeting. This may take up to four weeks.

We will write to your GP following your appointment, and you will receive a copy of this letter.

Breast Care Nurses

Specialist breast care nurses are available to provide support and guidance throughout the process. In cases where the clinical examination or the imaging are highly suspicious of cancer, the breast care nurses will contact you to provide support before the biopsy results have been reported.

What if I am still concerned

Although we put great effort into providing efficient care, sometimes things do not work the way we would like them to. If you are expecting scans and these do not materialise, please contact the breast screening unit (0300 707 5899, bsuapppointments@wwl.nhs.uk).

If you are not satisfied with your diagnosis, if you are looking for a follow-up appointment or looking for results, please contact the respective consultant secretaries on the contacts below:

Ms Afify – Susan Butterworth 0300 707 2489 susan.butterworth@wwl.nhs.uk

Mr Dalli – Rachel Brandon 0300 707 2246 rachel.brandon@wwl.nhs.uk

Mr Krishnan – Rachel Hamnett 0300 707 2486 rachel.hamnett@wwl.nhs.uk

Mr Zacharioudakis – Jessica Fisher 0300 707 3051 jess.fisher@wwl.nhs.uk

If your symptoms change or get worse following the consultation (e.g. a breast lump grows or becomes more prominent), you should speak to your GP. In these circumstances, you may need a re-assessment or even a second opinion from another practitioner.

We are continuously reviewing our processes to improve our service and would appreciate any positive or negative feedback.



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