

Oxford Sarcoma Service

Imaging and Diagnostic Tests

Information for patients



The Oxford Sarcoma Service at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre cares for patients with bone and soft tissue tumours. It is one of five specialist centres in the country treating people with bone tumours. These are rare and uncommon tumours.

The Sarcoma (multidisciplinary) team is made up of surgeons, radiologists, oncologists, specialist nurses and allied health professionals from the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The team is able to make sure that you have the appropriate diagnostic tests and support. Our aim is for a seamless pathway of care if sarcoma is diagnosed.

Making a diagnosis

Following a clinical assessment, so that we can make a definitive diagnosis, you will need a number of investigative tests. Any tests that you may be asked to have will be carried out as quickly as possible, usually within 1-2 weeks of a request.

There is a short description of each of these tests on the following pages.

Test results

It can take up to two weeks to process these tests and complex tests may take a little longer. Once the results have been reported, we will arrange an appointment with a specialist doctor, for you to discuss the findings.

Investigative tests

MRI scan (*Magnetic Resonance Imaging*)

Using magnetism, an MRI scan shows up muscles, blood and nerve vessels, giving detailed pictures of specific areas of your body.

You will need to lie flat on a couch, which moves inside a long tube. It is a painless procedure but can be rather noisy (you will be given earplugs), and some people find it claustrophobic. If your tumour is painful you may like to take some painkillers beforehand. The test lasts between 30-60 minutes.

Biopsy

A biopsy involves taking a piece of tissue from the tumour, which is then sent to the laboratory to be looked at under a microscope by a pathologist. This can tell us whether the tumour is cancerous or not, and what particular cell type it is. The type of cell determines the treatments that may be recommended.

The biopsy process involves using a core (hollow) needle to

remove a piece of tissue. You will be given local anaesthetic first, so that your skin and the area beneath it is numb. The biopsy may be carried out using ultrasound or CT guidance, to show the doctor where to collect the sample.

Before your biopsy, please tell the doctor if you are taking drugs to thin your blood – such as aspirin or warfarin. You may need to stop taking them beforehand.

You may have some pain after the procedure, in the area where the biopsy was carried out. Paracetamol should help relieve this.

CT scan (*Computerised Tomography*)

Using a series of angled X-rays, a three dimensional picture is produced showing 'sliced' cross sections through the body. The CT scanner is a large doughnut-shaped machine. You will need to lie on a couch, which will slide backwards and forwards through the scanner as it takes pictures. It is a painless procedure that takes approximately 30 minutes.

If you have a cancer diagnosis you will have a routine CT scan of your chest to look for any disease that may have spread.

PET CT scan (*Positron Emission Tomography Scan*)

A PET scan uses low dose radioactive sugar to measure the activity of cells in different parts of the body. The radioactive sugar is taken up by the cells and, depending on their activity, they will show on the scan in different colours – ranging from green to red. Cancer cells are usually more active and will show up on a PET scan.

A small dose of mildly radioactive dye will be injected into your bloodstream. You will be asked to rest for one hour before the scan is then taken. The whole procedure takes approximately 2 hours.

Bone scan

This scan looks at all the bones in the body and is a more sensitive test than simple X-rays. Abnormal bone absorbs more radioactivity than normal bone and will show up darker on the scan.

A radioactive dye will be injected into your blood stream. This dye will travel to your bones, which takes 2-3 hours. You will then need to lie on a couch under the scanner and pictures of your whole body will be taken. This takes approximately 45 minutes.

Where are our scanners?

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

Radiology: **01865 738 189**

- X-ray • MRI • Ultrasound • Biopsy

Churchill Hospital

Radiology: **01865 235 761**

- CT • CT Chest • PET CT scan • CT guided biopsy

Nuclear Medicine: **01865 235 804**

- Bone scan

John Radcliffe Hospital

Nuclear Medicine: **01865 720 836**

- Bone scan

Contact details

If you have any further questions or would like to know more about the tests, please contact us.

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Mrs Wendy Perrin

Associate Advanced Nurse Practitioner – Sarcoma

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Mrs Helen Stradling

Advanced Nurse Practitioner – Sarcoma

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Telephone: 01865 738 282 or 01865 737 861
(answerphone available)

Switchboard: 0300 304 7777

Other useful contacts

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

Sarcoma UK

Tel: 0808 801 0401

<https://sarcoma.org.uk/>

Maggie's Centre Oxford

Tel: 01865 751 882

www.maggiescentres.org/our-centres/maggies-oxford/

Maggie's CancerLinks

www.maggiescentres.org/cancerlinks/

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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