

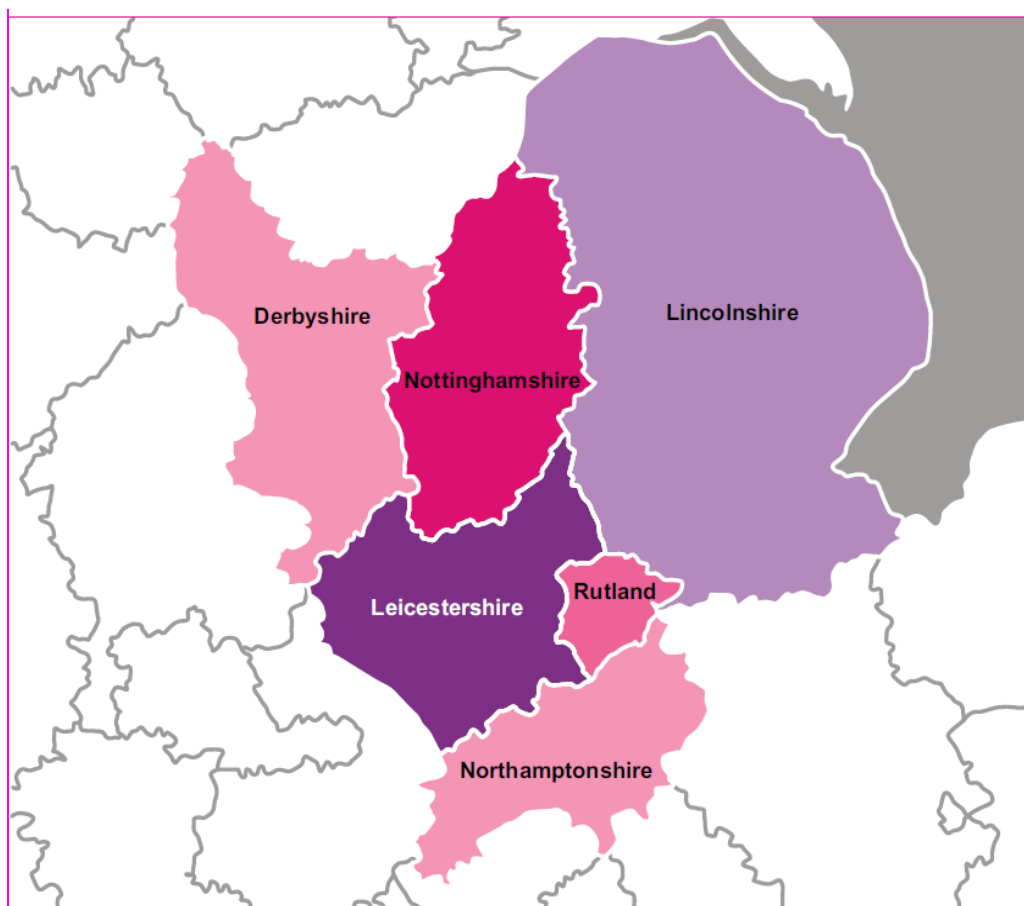
# Imaging and diagnostic tests

Information for patients

Produced: Oct 2020

Review: Oct 2023

Leaflet number: 733    Version: 4



**East Midlands  
Sarcoma Service**

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Introduction

You have been referred to the East Midlands Sarcoma Service (EMSS) by your GP or hospital specialist as you have a lump that needs further investigation. Being referred to this service does not mean that you have a sarcoma.

## What is a sarcoma?

A sarcoma is a rare type of cancer arising from connective tissue (muscle, bone, nerves, fatty and fibrous tissues). Sarcomas can occur anywhere in the body.

Most lumps are benign, meaning they are not cancer. It is more common to have a lipoma, which is a lump made up of fatty tissue. The EMSS team have expertise in this area and can make the right diagnosis so that you can get the care you need.

The team you see in clinic will discuss with you what needs to be done to help find out what the lump is and likely treatment.

The East Midlands Sarcoma Service is a regional specialist team taking referrals from the East Midlands area which includes Nottingham, Mansfield, Derby, Lincoln, Leicester, Kettering and Northampton. We also accept referrals for patients outside of our area.

We might refer you to other specialist centres for some of the investigations that you need.

This leaflet gives you a brief summary of some of the tests you may have. More detailed information will be sent to you if and when appropriate.

## Making a diagnosis

Following a clinical assessment, and to make a definitive diagnosis, a number of investigative tests are normally needed. Any tests that you are asked to have will be undertaken as quickly as possible, usually within seven to fourteen days of a request.

## Investigative tests

### MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

Using magnetism an MRI scan shows muscles, nerves and blood vessels, giving detailed pictures of specific areas of your body. The test lasts between 30 and 60 minutes. You will be required to lie flat on a couch inside a long tube. Some people feel slightly claustrophobic whilst having the scan. It is a painless procedure that can be rather noisy. You will be given earplugs or headphones to protect your ears from the noise. If you are taking painkillers, you may wish to take some before your test. Before the procedure begins, a member of staff will explain what is going to happen, and you will be asked to complete a safety questionnaire, which will include questions about whether you have a pacemaker or any metalwork in your body.

## Investigative tests (continued)

### Biopsy

A biopsy involves taking a piece of tissue from the lump. Local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area where the biopsy needle is to be inserted. The biopsy may be taken using ultrasound or CT guidance. The tissue will be sent to the laboratory to be looked at by a pathologist. This can determine whether the lump is cancerous or not, and what particular cell type it is. This information will help us to decide on the best treatment for you.

Some people find that the procedure causes some soreness that usually goes away after a short while. We will place a small dressing over the site of biopsy.

**Please tell the doctor if you are taking medicines that thin your blood, such as aspirin, warfarin or clopidogrel.**

### CT Scan (Computed 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 be asked 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 about half an hour. Occasionally a small injection of iodine dye is given into the arm in order to give clearer pictures.

### PET Scan (Positron Emission Tomography)

A PET scan uses low dose radioactive 'glucose' to measure the activity of cells in different parts of your body. A small dose of mildly radioactive dye is injected into your bloodstream. Abnormal cells are usually more active than normal cells and will show up on a PET scan.

Once the dye has been injected you will be asked to rest for an hour before the scan is done. The whole procedure takes about two hours.

### Bone scan

This scan produces pictures of all the bones in your body, and is more sensitive than simple X-rays. A radioactive dye will be injected into your blood stream. This dye will travel to your bones over period of two to three hours. Abnormal bone absorbs more radioactivity than normal bone, and will show up on the scan as 'hot spots'.

You will be asked to lie on a couch whilst pictures of your whole body are taken. The procedure takes about 45 minutes.

### Bone marrow sample

Some patients will have a bone marrow sample taken, usually from the back of the hip bone.

You will have local anaesthetic to numb the area. Then a needle is passed through the skin into the bone marrow to obtain a sample. This sample will be sent to the laboratory to be examined under a microscope. We will place a small dressing to the area after the procedure.

Some patients find the procedure painful, and you may have some discomfort in the area for a few days.

## Test results

It can take up to two weeks to process these tests; complex tests may take longer. It may be necessary, with your consent, to get advice from other specialist treatment centres. Once results have been reported we will arrange an appointment with a specialist doctor, so that you can discuss the results and what they mean for you.

## Sources of information and support (continued)

### Macmillan Cancer Support

Produces a booklet on soft tissue sarcomas, as well as information sheets about the chemotherapy drugs we use to treat sarcoma.

Freephone: 0808 808 00 00

Website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### Cancer Research UK

Information about the diagnosis and treatment of sarcoma.

Freephone: 0808 800 4040

Website: [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

### Sarcoma UK

Sarcoma UK is a patient support organisation founded by a patient with sarcoma. The organisation provides a newsletter and information leaflets, organises meetings and lobbies for patients with sarcoma.

Website: [www.sarcoma.org.uk](http://www.sarcoma.org.uk)

**For more advice and help, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist (Key worker).**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਸਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

**If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)**