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New Device Reduces Repeat Surgeries After Lumpectomy

In a recent study, researchers found that a new device called MarginProbe helps make sure enough tissue is removed during a lumpectomy. A lumpectomy is the removal of the tumor and some of the surrounding tissue, called a margin, during an operation. Currently, surgeons often have to wait one or two weeks to find out if the tissue around the tumor that was removed during surgery contains cancer cells. Because of this, up to 40% of women who have had a lumpectomy need to have more surgeries to remove this additional cancerous tissue.

With MarginProbe, surgeons are able to look for cancer cells in the margin in about five minutes while a patient is still in the operating room. This means that if cancer cells are found in the margin, more tissue can be removed immediately, reducing the number of surgeries that a patient would need.

During surgery, the 596 patients who participated in the study had their tissue examined with either MarginProbe or the conventional method. When MarginProbe was used and cancer cells were found in the tumor margin, the surgeons removed additional tissue during the same procedure. Researchers then compared the amount of tissue removed during the surgery and any extra tissue removed after the MarginProbe was used to the amount of tissue removed in the initial and any repeat surgeries when the MarginProbe was not used. They found that the total amount of tissue removed was similar whether or not MarginProbe was used. However, 37% of the patients who did not have their tissue examined with the MarginProbe needed to have additional surgeries, compared with 13% of those who did have their tissue examined with the MarginProbe.

What this means for patients

?The goal of a lumpectomy is to remove the cancer with a clear margin and preserve the cosmetic appearance of the breast. We do that by removing less tissue. But we do not want to have a high rate of repeat surgeries. This device has shown us, for the first time, that we can reduce the number of surgeries without removing more tissue,? said senior author Susan K. Boolbol, MD, a breast surgeon at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. MarginProbe is still being researched and may not be available outside of a clinical trial. It is important to talk with your doctor about your surgery, the results, and the next steps.

Questions to ask the doctor

- What type of breast cancer do I have? What is the stage?
- What are my treatment options? Is lumpectomy an option?
- How long before I know if I need another surgery to remove more tissue?

For More Information

Guide to Breast Cancer [1]

Understanding Cancer Surgery [2]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/node/18618
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24720