



PATHOLOGISTS EXAMINE TISSUE BIOPSIES

Some tests, such as a glucose test, produce results that are understood by all physicians. Others require specialized professional interpretation by an expert, usually a pathologist. All tissues removed at biopsy or surgery are examined under the microscope by a pathologist who makes a diagnosis. Pathologists assist surgeons during operations by providing immediate diagnoses on biopsies (sometimes called frozen sections) - specially treated tissues removed in surgery and rushed to the lab. The pathologist quickly provides information to help the surgeons complete the operation in a way that assures the best result possible for the patient.

With the help of cytotechnologists, pathologists also examine cells taken in a Pap smear or through fine needle aspiration (FNA), to detect abnormal cells that might signal cancer. FNA allows physicians to remove fluid and cells from a suspected tumor using a hollow needle and may take the place of surgery to obtain a biopsy.

Traditional microscopic examination is now complemented by a sophisticated array of high tech electronic and molecular biologic techniques. Genetic analysis of DNA or chromosomes in cells are good examples of these new techniques and often allow more accurate and timely diagnosis on small biopsies and cell samples.