

## SENTINEL LYMPH NODE BIOPSY

The **Walnut Creek Surgical Associates** – Dr Baker, Dr Mazolewski, Dr. Young Dr Eigelberger, and Dr Childs, are all trained and experienced in the biopsy of **sentinel lymph nodes**. This is a less invasive technique for **melanoma** and **breast cancer**.

Surgeons use **Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy** to find cancer cells that have escaped the tumor and threaten to infiltrate other parts of the body. The sentinel node, or the first lymph node to which extracellular fluid from a tumor drains, acts as the gateway to the lymphatic system and beyond.

**Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy** may spare patients who have no trace of disease in their sentinel nodes from the sometimes severe complications of having an entire nodal basin removed: chronic swelling, discomfort, infection, and reduced mobility. The procedure also allows for more thorough pathologic analysis and more accurate staging, perhaps even improving survival rates in patients with certain cancers. In some cases, when the **Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy** shows cancer cells, the remainder of the lymph nodes may need to be removed.

**Finding the sentinel node** -- This technique is based upon the theory that when tumor cells migrate, they spread to one or a few lymph nodes before involving other nodes. These “**sentinel**” nodes can be identified by injecting a blue dye or radioactive material around the primary tumor prior to the wide local excision, and then searching for the node that has taken up the dye or the radioactive tracer at the time of surgery (termed "lymphatic mapping"). The status of this first draining or "**sentinel**" lymph node (whether positive or negative for tumor involvement) accurately predicts the status of the remaining regional lymph nodes. The presence and number of tumor cells in the lymph nodes are strong prognostic factors. The accurate staging made possible by such painstaking pathology allows oncologists to choose the most appropriate therapies.

**Walnut Creek Surgical Associates** has partnered with oncologists in this area to provide the current and comprehensive techniques for treatment of **melanoma** and **breast cancer**.

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