# The Sewing Thimble as an Adjunct to Fine Needle Aspiration

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## Introduction

Fine needle aspiration (FNA) is generally considered the gold standard in evaluation of the neck mass, including masses in the submandibular triangle. Using a bimanual technique, by placing a finger within the oral cavity or floor of mouth, the contents the submandibular triangle and the submandibular gland can be displaced laterally and evaluation, including fine needle aspiration, made easier. The potential problem when performing a fine needle aspiration via the bimanual technique is that of placing the aspiration needle too far and puncturing the examiner's own finger during the process. This carries the attendant risk of infection, hepatitis, or even AIDS.

The sewing thimble, first described in antiquity, has been in existence for centuries. Use of the sewing thimble as a finger guard can enhance the results of fine needle aspiration when used for evaluation of masses in the submandibular triangle.

## Methods and Materials

A sewing thimble is placed over the surgeon's index and/or middle finger (Figure 1). An examination glove is then placed over the surgeon's hand (Figure 2). The glove keeps the operative field clean and also keeps the thimble from becoming dislodged and perhaps swallowed or aspirated by the patient. Once the mass has displaced laterally and inferiorly using the bimanual palpation technique, FNA can be carried out (Figure 3).

## Discussion

Masses in the submandibular triangle are generally those of nodal or salivary tissue. Use of the aforementioned technique aids in obtaining a good tissue biopsy and securing a diagnosis. The technique described is easy to master and has little or no learning curve. It is an inexpensive adjunct and can improve the FNA diagnostic rates of masses in the submandibular triangle. The use of the thimble as a finger guard reduces risk of injury and potential complications such as infection, hepatitis, or AIDS to the surgeon performing the FNA.

## Conclusions

Use of a sewing thimble as an adjunct in FNA when using a bimanual technique is inexpensive, safe, and has little or no learning curve for the operator.

## References