A needle localization exam of the breast is done when another breast exam shows breast lumps or abnormalities. A needle localization of the breast is a pre-surgical procedure in which a wire is inserted via a hollow needle into the breast to localize (pinpoint) either a mass or calcifications which may not be felt on physical examination.

During a needle localization exam of the breasts, imaging is used to place a needle next to an abnormal area in the breast. Then, in the operating room, the surgeon uses the wire as a guide and can remove both the abnormal area and the wire.

The radiologist will numb the area of your breast with a local anesthetic and insert a localization needle into your breast, pointing toward the spot that needs to be removed. The radiologist will then take more images to confirm the position of the needle and withdraw the needle leaving the wire behind. Two final images of the breasts will be taken to confirm the placement of the wire.

A needle localization of the breast typically takes thirty minutes to perform before a patient goes to surgery.