

PATIENT INFORMATION

Oral (mouth) Biopsy

What is a biopsy?

A biopsy is a procedure where a small piece of tissue is removed from an area so that it can be looked at closely under a microscope. The biopsy is required to confirm a diagnosis.

How is it done?

In most cases biopsies are carried out under local anaesthetic (an injection into the area to numb it). The injection takes a few minutes to work and it means that the biopsy will be painless. The removal of any tissue will leave a small hole that often requires stitching; this procedure usually takes about 15 minutes. The stitches may be dissolvable, and will take about 2 weeks to disappear, if not you will be given an appointment to return to the outpatients clinic to have stitches removed in about 1 week.

How should I look after the wound?

Will I have stitches?

- If the biopsy has been taken from inside your mouth, there will usually be a few stitches that will dissolve by themselves over a period of a few weeks, you should be careful not to dislodge any stitches; you should eat a soft diet, keep your mouth clean with hot salt mouthwashes and use any antiseptic mouthwashes or ointments as shown by your doctor. Any mouthwashes should be started the day after your biopsy has been taken. Teeth can be brushed as normal taking extra care where stitches are close to teeth.

Will it be painful?

- You may feel a little discomfort after the local anaesthetic has worn off.
- If necessary, take your normal pain killers e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Usually any discomfort only lasts for a few days

What should I do if the wound bleeds?

- Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of the biopsy this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound has been stitched.
- If the biopsy site should bleed after you get home this can usually be stopped by applying constant pressure over the area for 10-15 minutes with a clean rolled up handkerchief or swab. Do not dab the area or keep looking at the wound as this will not allow the bleeding to stop.
- If the bleeding does not stop then you should contact:
 - The outpatients department 9am – 5pm
 - Your local Hospital Casualty Department out of hours.

What else do I need to know?

- Infection sometimes occurs after an operation on the skin or inside the mouth. If the wound becomes very red, painful or weepy then it may have become infected and you should contact your GP
- Be careful not to bite numb areas inside your mouth or on your lip
- You will usually be given an outpatients appointment about 1 week after the biopsy so that your results can be discussed with you
- You should be able to return to normal activities the day after your biopsy. Your doctor can give you more advice about this if you are unsure.

Contacts:

ENT outpatients ☎ (01803) 655134

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery outpatients ☎ (01803) 655150

Torbay Hospital switchboard ☎ (01803) 614567

- Ask for the on call doctor for either Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery or ENT Surgery if biopsy was performed in the ENT department

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.