

Mouth biopsy performed under local anaesthetic

What is a biopsy?

A biopsy is when a sample of tissue is taken from a part of the body. It is then looked at under the microscope to make a diagnosis.

A biopsy is a quick and relatively simple procedure for the purpose of rapid diagnosis of an ulcer, lump or other abnormality in the mouth.

What are the alternatives?

In order to obtain a diagnosis of the abnormality in your mouth there is no other alternative to performing this simple test.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

Any surgical procedure carries the slight risks that will be explained when your consent form is written out by the doctor and signed by you. These are:

- Post operative discomfort, similar to having a mouth ulcer.
- Bleeding and infection.

Instructions will be given to you after the procedure to enable you to minimise these small risks.

Although you will sign a consent form for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

The benefits of the biopsy are either to remove the abnormal area or to sample it to obtain a diagnosis of what it is.

What should I do before I come into hospital?

The biopsy will be performed under local anaesthetic so it is sensible to eat before your appointment and have a good fluid intake before the procedure. This will help reduce any feelings of dizziness following the injection.

It is important to take all of your normal daily medication including inhalers as usual. Do not stop any medicines such as aspirin or warfarin. If you are taking warfarin then the nurse will do a simple finger-prick test to check your blood just before the procedure.

What is a local anaesthetic?

Biopsies are performed under local anaesthetic. This will involve an injection of anaesthetic into the area where the biopsy is going to be taken from. The injection is a similar medication as that used by your dentist. It will only make a small area of your mouth numb.

What will happen during the procedure?

On the day of the procedure, the doctor will ensure that you know what is going to happen and will answer any questions you may have. A small amount of local anaesthetic will then be injected in the area of your mouth where the sample is to be taken. This will sting for a few

seconds, but you will not feel anything after that. A small sample will be taken and sent to the laboratory for examination. The area will then be stitched or cauterised painlessly. If stitches are used, they will dissolve without the need for removal.

Before you leave the department, the nurse will give you instructions about how to look after your wound to ensure good healing. You will be given an appointment to come back to the unit to get your biopsy results which can take two to six weeks to fully process.

How will I feel afterwards?

For a short time after the biopsy has been taken the injection area will feel slightly swollen. The numbness may last for a couple of hours. When the anaesthetic wears off you will experience some discomfort which should be relieved by taking a mild painkiller such as Paracetamol to help you with this. For several days afterwards you will feel as though you have a mouth ulcer at the biopsy site.

How long will I be in hospital?

One of the benefits of having minor procedures under local anaesthetic is that you only need to be in the department for a short time. The biopsy will only take approximately 20 minutes to perform. As soon as you feel comfortable to do so you will be able to go home.

What should I do when I go home?

After the biopsy is performed, the nurse will explain how to look after your wound. She will give you a printed sheet with the appropriate instructions on it. It is important that you follow this advice and ask questions about anything that might be unclear.

How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

Part of your mouth will be numb for about two hours after the biopsy is performed. It is not advisable for you to eat solid food while you are numb as you may accidentally bite the inside of your mouth. During this time it is safe to drink as long as the drink is not too hot. When sensation returns, a soft diet is advisable for a few days. Strong flavours, such as curry, might best be avoided.

Will I have to come back to hospital?

After your biopsy has been performed, the nurse will make another appointment for you to come back and see the doctor; by which time the laboratory results will be available. These results usually take six weeks to process. The doctor will be able to check your wound to see that it has completely healed and answer any further questions you may have.

When can I return to work?

The biopsy is a minor procedure. Some people go straight to work after it has been done. You may, however, feel that you would like some more time before you do this depending on where the biopsy is to be performed, and what kind of job you do. If the biopsy is on your lip, the stitches may be visible for a few days. If your job is very heavy or dirty, you may be advised to let the wound heal for a few days before you go back. The same is true of jobs that require excessive speaking or playing certain musical instruments. The team will be happy to answer any of your questions and advise you appropriately.

What if my condition worsens whilst waiting for treatment?

If you are concerned and wish to speak to one of our team please contact the department using the appropriate number below.

Sources of information

Conquest Hospital:

Maxillofacial Unit - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 773207.

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Maxillofacial and Orthodontic Unit - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 771756

Out of hours:

In an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Mr C J Surwald - Maxillofacial Consultant.

Mr M Shastri - Maxillofacial Consultant.

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Diagnosis, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Outpatients

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Responsible clinician: Lesley Davies
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