

ORAL (MOUTH) BIOPSY

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any treatments you may have to have and contains answers to many of the commonly-asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or would like further explanation, please ask.

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 may aim to remove an area completely (this is known as an excisional biopsy, and is usually only appropriate for small lumps or swellings). Occasionally, only a small piece of an abnormal area is removed to confirm a diagnosis (this is called an incisional biopsy).

How is it done?

In most cases biopsies are carried out under local anaesthesia (an injection into the area to numb it). The injection takes a couple of minutes to work and means that the biopsy will be painless. The biopsy usually leaves a small hole, and this often requires stitching. In the majority of cases the stitches used are dissolvable and can take around one month to disappear. The whole process (local anaesthetic injection, biopsy and stitching) usually takes around 15 minutes from start to finish.

Is there much soreness or swelling afterwards?

When the local anaesthetic wears off after a few hours, there is relatively little in the way of pain or swelling. Occasionally, it is necessary to take simple painkillers (eg Paracetamol, Ibuprofen). Usually, any discomfort lasts only a few days.

Will there be much bleeding?

Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of biopsy, this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched. Should the biopsy site bleed again when you get home, this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 10 minutes with a rolled-up handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the Oral Surgery department.

When can I return to work?

This largely depends on your job and how you feel after the procedure. Most people feel able to return to work later the same day.

Are there any things I should do when I get home?

Be careful not to bite the numb areas of your mouth. On the day of surgery you should avoid rinsing your mouth out vigorously, as this may cause bleeding. You should clean your teeth normally, including those teeth next to the site of the biopsy. If you find that food catches around the stitches, then the area can be gently rinsed with a mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoonful of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water), commencing on the day after surgery.

Will I need another appointment?

Since the stitches are dissolvable a review appointment is not always necessary, but you may be given one if the results of the biopsy need to be discussed with you.

If you have a problem or are worried about your progress, please contact us. Weekdays 9.00 am - 4.30 pm. Telephone the hospital on 01709 321146 and ask for the Oral Surgery Department. All other times (including Bank holidays) call Rotherham District General Hospital on (01709) 820000 and ask for the Oral Surgery SHO on duty.