

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

Oral (mouth) biopsy

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment 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 your surgeon.

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.

Excision biopsy: The biopsy may aim to remove an area completely. This is usually only appropriate for small lumps or swellings.

Incisional biopsy: Occasionally only a small piece of an abnormal area is removed to confirm a diagnosis.

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 that often requires stitching.
- In the majority of cases the stitches used are dissolvable and take around two weeks to disappear.
- The whole process (local anaesthetic injection, biopsy and stitching) usually takes around 15 to 30 minutes.

Is there much soreness or swelling afterwards?

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

Will there be much bleeding?

Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of the biopsy, it 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 hospital on 01223 245151 and ask for the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon on call.

When can I return to work?

This largely depends on your job and how you feel after the procedure. Most people are 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 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 teaspoon 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 will usually be given one so that the results of the biopsy can be discussed with you. If no follow up appointment is arranged we will write to you with the results.

Adapted from:

British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons.

<http://www.baoms.org.uk/>



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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