



Sexual Health Services  
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

**NHS**  
Nottingham  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

# Skin Biopsy

Information for patients

**Department of Genito-Urinary Medicine  
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust**

This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

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This leaflet is aimed at patients undergoing skin biopsy and gives them information about the procedure and skin care following a biopsy.

## **What is a skin biopsy?**

Biopsy means taking a small sample of skin, after numbing the area with a local anaesthetic, in order to examine this sample under the microscope.

## **Why do I need it?**

A biopsy is done in order to make a diagnosis of a skin condition or to remove some abnormalities (e.g. moles). Making a correct diagnosis will help in a more successful management of your condition. It may also inform us whether we need to refer you further to more specialised services (e.g. Dermatology, Urology, Gynaecology).

Sometimes the biopsy may not reveal anything in addition to what is already known but may be helpful in ruling out cancer.

## What to expect:

### Before the procedure

Please bring a list of any medication you are on. If you are on Warfarin, please make sure to have your INR checked 2-3 days before your biopsy appointment. If it is below 2 or above 3.5 please contact us as your appointment may need to be rescheduled.

There is no need to stop antiplatelet medicines (such as Aspirin or Clopidogrel) or other anticoagulants such as Rivaroxaban. The risk of bleeding and bruising is higher with these medications but we do not recommend stopping them.

Please tell us if you have any allergies to medications, including local anaesthetics.

You can eat and drink as normal before your appointment.

Although the procedure is really straightforward, rarely, some people may experience light-headedness afterwards.

The doctor will explain why you need the procedure, what it involves, when to expect the results of your biopsy (the report from the histology department) and answer any questions you might have.

A verbal consent will be obtained once you agree to have the procedure and you understand what it involves.

## **During the procedure**

A local anaesthetic will be given in order to numb the area from where the biopsy is to be taken. This involves an injection which may cause a momentary discomfort (it may sting for a few seconds). The rest of the procedure is pain free, once the local anaesthetic takes effect. You may feel some pressure/pulling but no pain.

The procedure may take anything from 10 to 30 minutes.

One or more biopsies may be needed and therefore more than 1 injections will be given.

Not all biopsies require stitches. On some occasions, pressure and application of a solution that stops bleeding (Monsel's solution) may be enough. On others, a stitch may be required.

The stitches used are dissolvable. Most stitches should dissolve or fall out within 2 weeks but sometimes it takes longer. If the wound has healed and the stitches not fully dissolved then contact us in order to have them removed.

## **After the procedure**

Once the local anaesthetic wears off (usually 30-40 mins) you may experience a small degree of soreness. If so, this can be managed with simple pain relief such as Paracetamol.

The wound will be dressed although certain areas, such as the genitals, make dressing difficult or impossible. In this case it should be left uncovered. Healing takes 1 to 3 weeks but you should be able to return to normal activity within 1 to 3 days.

Keep the area dry for 48 hours. If there is a dressing, leave it on for 24-48 hours. After this you can shower and wash the area gently, although soaking in the bath (or swimming) should be avoided for a few more days. Avoid perfumed products or chemicals until healing is achieved. Use water and mild soap only. Do not scrub your wound, just pat it dry.

Avoid Hydrogen Peroxide or alcohol-based products on the stitches.

You may use a thin layer of clean Vaseline or an antibiotic ointment if so advised, with clean hands. If there is any bleeding, apply firm pressure using a gauze for 5 to 10 minutes. Bruising or mild swelling may also occur. Bruising may last for up to 1-2 weeks.

A small scar at the site of the biopsy is common.

The results of the biopsy may take up to 3 weeks. Once we receive them, we will either write to you with the results or call you. A follow up appointment, if needed, will also be given to you in order to discuss the results and decide on further management of the condition.

If the results suggest the need for referral to more specialised services, such as the vulva clinic or Urology, a referral will be made by us and you will be informed of this.

## **Clinic details and information**

The clinic will contact you either with a letter of appointment or a text message, depending on the circumstances in which the biopsy was booked. Please remember that the clinician performing the procedure may be either male or female. If you wish to be seen by a clinician of a specific gender, please inform the clinic beforehand.

## **Call your doctor or our department if you experience:**

- Bleeding that cannot be stopped after pressure or ongoing bleeding persisting more than 1 week
- Severe pain
- Signs of infection such as fever or chills, local swelling, redness, soreness, bad smelling or yellowish discharge. In this case, you may need antibiotics

### **Contact number**

0115 9627627

### **Website**

[www.nuh.nuh.uk/sexual-health-services](http://www.nuh.nuh.uk/sexual-health-services)

### **Twitter**

@nottmsexualhealth

## Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

**Freephone:** 0800 183 0204

**From abroad:** +44 115 924 9924 ext 85412 or 82301

**Deaf and hard of hearing:** text 07812 270003

**E-mail:** [nuhnt.pals@nhs.net](mailto:nuhnt.pals@nhs.net)

**Letter:** NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR

[www.nuh.nhs.uk](http://www.nuh.nhs.uk)



You can also scan the QR code to leave patient, family or carer feedback. After scanning the QR code please go to 'How can I leave my feedback' and select the service that you have accessed and then follow the on screen prompts.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email [nuhnt.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:nuhnt.patient.information@nhs.net)

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