

Possible complications to watch for

Infection -signs of infection include, fevers, rigors [or “the chills”], discharge of purulent fluid from the wound, pain and/or redness. If this occurs please see your doctor immediately.

Bleeding is always a possibility after skin surgery, particularly for those on blood thinners or anticoagulants. If this occurs please apply firm compression on the bleeding site and speak with a doctor immediately if bleeding hasn't settled.

Scarring is always a risk in skin biopsy and surgery. Scars are often expected and can be unique for individuals depending on multiple factors. The use of silicon based products and massage this onto the skin twice daily for a number of weeks to months can help reduce scarring. Large scars known as keloid or hypertrophic scars can be problematic and should be discussed with your doctor if you have any concerns.

Nerve damage – is very dependant upon where the biopsy is being taken from however this is always a consideration. In certain circumstances it can be permanent. Although this is very rare please notify your doctor if you have concerns with sensory disturbance, weakness or any concerns you may have.

In some circumstances a further biopsy may be required as there is a potential risk that the sample was inadequate.

Why biopsy

The purpose of a skin biopsy is to facilitate further analysis by taking a specimen and sending it to a pathologist to review at closer detail often under a microscope. The reason it may be necessary to do so is to help assist in an accurate diagnosis. In obtaining an accurate diagnosis with the help of the pathologist your doctor can then plan an appropriate management plan for you.

Types of skin biopsy

There are many different forms of skin biopsies. All biopsies sites will be anaesthetised prior to the biopsy. This process can cause a sting and the doctor will warn you prior. Following this the biopsy will commence. The most common biopsy techniques include:

Shave Biopsy – a small shave blade will sample the skin. The wound will heal from the base upwards.

Punch Biopsy – a small ‘core’ type tool is used to encircle and take a piece of skin – it varies in calibre as to the size of specimen. Often a small suture [stitch] is placed to close the area of skin left behind. This will need to be removed at a later date.

Curette Biopsy – involves the use of a curette which is a cup-shaped or spoon shape blade which is used to scoop out the sample of skin required. Again the wound typically heals from the base upwards



Bass Coast Skin Clinic

Biopsy Guide

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Pre-biopsy Planning

Please discuss with your doctor your current medicines you are taking. If your doctor has stopped your blood thinning or anticoagulant medicines it is important to plan and arrange recommencement when it is safe to do so.

Other over the counter medicines that can affect bleeding is aspirin, fish oils and some of the anti-inflammatory drugs.

If your biopsy is in a hard to reach site or in a hairy area – this site may need to be shaved in order to obtain the specimen.

If you have any pacemakers, defibrillators or implantable medical devices please notify your doctor on the day of your procedure.

If you need to take antibiotics due to rare medical reasons prior to skin surgery please.

Please also discuss with your doctor any allergies you may have – for instance chlorhexidine, lignocaine or any dressings, on day of procedure.

An out of pocket gap for the biopsy procedure may apply – please check with the practice.

Follow up

Your doctor will arrange with you a time to return to remove non-dissolvable dressing.

Try and avoid getting the site wet for the first 24- 48 hours.

You can change the dressing at home using an occlusive water permeable film dressing or apply vaseline to aid healing.

Lightly clean the site daily and re-apply the dressing.

If a stitch was used please discuss with your doctor when you need to return to have it removed.

Please keep a careful eye out for signs of infection:

- Redness
- Discharge
- Pain increasing
- Swelling
- Fevers /chills

Concerns

If this occurs please notify your doctor immediately or see a doctor at the local emergency department.

Tips on caring for your wound

If your dressing becomes soiled, wet or needs changing it is generally fine to apply a simple low adherent gauze secured with tape or a semipermeable film. If there are concerns with this please discuss with your doctor.

Looking after your general health and well-being is important – for example stopping smoking improves healing – it may be the perfect opportunity to stop smoking – please chat to your doctor or quitline [137848] for more information and support.

More information

<https://skinsurgeryforpatients.blogspot.com>
a great blog written by Prof Cliff Rosendahl.

<https://www.quit.org.au/>