

# Biopsy

## What is a biopsy?

This is when your doctor takes a small piece of tissue from a part of your body to look at it closely.

## Why do I need to have this test?

A biopsy helps your doctors to make a diagnosis. They look at the tissue under a microscope and do tests on the cells. This tells them if a lump or abnormal area on your skin or inside your body is cancer or not. It also tells them what type of cancer it is.

## What happens?

There are different types of biopsy. Your doctor or nurse will explain more about the type of biopsy you will have and what will happen. You may be able to have a family member or friend with you during the test, if you want to.

## Before the biopsy

You might have the biopsy taken under a general anaesthetic. This means you will be asleep and will not be aware of what is happening, or be able to feel anything. You will be asked not to eat or drink for six hours before having a general anaesthetic. A general anaesthetic is usually used if a larger area or tissue is being taken, or if the area is deeper in the body.

Or you might have the biopsy under a local anaesthetic. This means you will stay awake, but the doctor will give you an injection to numb the area so you can't feel it. You might feel some pressure during the biopsy, but it should not be painful.

## During the biopsy

What happens during the biopsy depends on the type you have. The most common types of biopsy are:

- needle biopsy – the doctor uses a thin needle to remove a very small piece of tissue
- surgical biopsy – the doctor makes a cut to remove a bigger area of tissue
- excisional biopsy – the doctor can remove the whole abnormal area.

For deeper biopsies, the doctors might use an ultrasound or CT scan during the biopsy to help guide them to the exact area.

## After the biopsy

If you had a general anaesthetic, you might feel a bit tired or sick for a few hours afterwards. Your nurse can give you drugs to help with any sickness. If you had a local anaesthetic, you won't feel sick.

You may feel a bit sore around the area of the biopsy. Your doctor will tell you which painkillers to take. Any bruising you have will go away in a couple of weeks.

It may take 1 to 2 weeks to get the results. This can be a worrying time. Talking to your family and friends about how you feel can help. You can also speak to your doctor or nurse if you have any problems, or if you need more support.