

## Ophthalmology

# Temporal artery biopsy

A temporal artery biopsy is a procedure which allows your doctor to confirm a diagnosis of giant cell arteritis.

### What is giant cell arteritis (GCA)?

Giant cell arteritis, also known as temporal arteritis, is a type of vasculitis, which means inflammation of the blood vessels. It mainly affects the branches of the external carotid artery, which is one of the major arteries supplying blood to the head and its structures, including the eyes.

This condition usually affects people over the age of 50 and becomes more common as people become older. The main complication of this condition is sudden blindness affecting one or both eyes. Other complications may include:

- double vision
- stroke
- aneurysms (swellings of the arteries which can rupture or leak)

To treat and prevent these complications we often use high doses of steroids. It is possible that you may have been started on this already.

### Why do I need a temporal artery biopsy?

A temporal artery biopsy can help your medical team to decide whether you have GCA or not. It is important to confirm this, as it will determine whether steroid treatment is needed or not as patients who are confirmed to have GCA will need steroids long term.



## Patient Information

Other investigations may include blood tests and a temporal artery ultrasound – you may have undergone these investigations already. In some cases, we may continue to treat you for giant cell arteritis even if the biopsy is negative or inconclusive.

### **How is a temporal artery biopsy done?**

A temporal artery biopsy is usually done as a day case procedure under local anaesthetic. We may shave any hair that is near your temple to access the artery – the hair will usually grow back and hide the scar. The surgeon will then make a cut through the skin to access the artery. A sample of the artery will then be taken.

This procedure is **not a treatment** for GCA. However, the results of the biopsy may help us to decide what treatment you require.

### **What are the risks?**

This is a relatively safe procedure but occasionally there can be complications. These can include:

- Infection of the wound (we will give you a course of antibiotics following the procedure to reduce the risk of this).
- Bleeding around the wound site.
- Scarring – this is often hidden in the hairline.
- Nerve damage – this could lead to numbness or weakness of the skin and/or face on the same side as the artery being sampled. This may or may not recover over time.
- Incorrect blood vessel may be sampled – rarely the incorrect vessel or nerve may be sampled instead of the artery. If this occurs, we may discuss the need for performing another biopsy
- Stroke – a very rare complication of this procedure.

### **What do I need to do before the surgery?**

Please inform your pre-assessment nurse and doctor of:

- Any allergies you may have (especially penicillin and iodine cleaning solution)

## Patient Information

- All medications you are taking including blood thinners such as aspirin, warfarin, rivaroxaban, clopidogrel etc. If you are on **warfarin**, please inform us if there is any issue with your INR control.

### **What do I do after the surgery?**

In most cases, you will be able to go home following the procedure. Please keep the dressing on till your follow up appointment in the clinic. We will give you oral antibiotics to take when you go home. There may be a small amount of pain as the local anaesthetic wears off. You can use simple painkillers like paracetamol as required to help with this.

Keep the wound clean and dry for the first 2 weeks after surgery. We will see you around 1 to 2 weeks after the procedure in clinic with the results of the biopsy. If you have been started on steroids, then you must continue this in the meantime.

### **For further information contact:**

- **Mrs Mehta's Secretary (Lisa Randall) – Tel: 024 7696 6508**

### **Whom do I contact if I need urgent help after the biopsy?**

### **Emergency eye appointments: new booking system**



**Scan the QR code or visit [uhcw.nhs.uk](http://uhcw.nhs.uk) and search Eye Emergency Referral Service with University Hospital, Coventry.**

You will be spoken to by an expert clinician who will give you specialist advice on the next steps to take.

Please provide a phone number which you can be contacted on for the consultation. Please also be aware that you will be phoned as close to the allotted time as possible, although at busy times unfortunately there may be a delay.

## Patient Information

**In the event that you feel you cannot wait to speak to someone or do not have online access then you may call 0247 696 4800.**

**This phone line is open 9am - 1pm; 1.30pm - 5pm (Monday - Friday, excluding bank holidays) and 9am - 12pm (Saturday).**

Please only attend the Eye Outpatient department if you have had a telephone consultation in advance and have been advised to attend.

**Out of hours there is a reduced emergency eye service available via the Accident and Emergency Department.**

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

### **Did we get it right?**

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[www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback)



#### **Document History**

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