

Maxillofacial Department

Oral (mouth) biopsy

This leaflet is to help improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment and contains the answers to frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or you would like further information please ask a member of staff.

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.

Two common types of biopsy are:

- **an excision biopsy** - the biopsy may aim to remove an area completely; this is usually only appropriate for small lumps or swellings
- **an incisional biopsy** – 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 anaesthetic (an injection into the area to numb it). This takes a couple of minutes to work and means that the biopsy will be painless.
- The biopsy will usually leave 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 minutes from start to finish.

Is there much soreness or swelling afterwards?

When the local anaesthetic wears off after a few hours, there is relatively



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little in the way of pain or swelling. Occasionally it is necessary to take simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Any discomfort should only last a few days.

Will there be much bleeding?

Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of the biopsy, this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched. If the biopsy site bleeds 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, clean, damp handkerchief or swab.

If the bleeding does not stop, please contact Clinic 11 on 024 7696 6500 during office hours.

Out of hours please contact University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire on 024 7696 4000, and request the maxillofacial senior house officer 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 the following day.

Are there any things I should do when I get home?

- Be careful not to bite the numb areas of your mouth.
- On the day of surgery you should avoid rinsing your mouth out vigorously. 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) starting the following day.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking for 24 hours.

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Will I need another appointment?

Since the stitches are dissolvable a review appointment is not always necessary but you may be given one so that the results of the biopsy can be discussed with you.

Adapted from information supplied by British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons <http://www.baoms.org.uk/>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6500 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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