

Oral (Mouth) biopsy

Information for patients



What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about an oral (mouth) biopsy. It tells you what it is, why it is done, how it is done, what to expect after the biopsy and how you can find out more information.

What is a biopsy?

An oral biopsy is a procedure, whereby, a small piece of tissue is removed from an area of the mouth so that it can be examined under a microscope.

Why is it done?

A biopsy is done to help provide a definitive diagnosis of your condition and can help guide appropriate treatment. Sometimes, a biopsy is carried out in order to remove an area completely and can be appropriate for small lumps or swellings.

Please eat and drink as normal, prior to the biopsy, and continue to take any regular medicines on the day of the procedure unless you are told otherwise by the doctor or dentist.

How is it done?

A biopsy is carried out under local anaesthetic to ensure that the procedure is painless. Sometimes, a small amount of local anaesthetic gel is applied to the area which is going to be biopsied in the first instance. Then, to make the area completely numb, an injection is given similar to what you experience at your dentist and this can take a few minutes to work.

Once the area is completely numb, a small piece of tissue is removed, this leaves a small wound that often requires stitching. In most cases, the stitches are dissolvable (which means they do not need to be removed). They usually last up to 10 days. The whole process: injection, biopsy and stitching usually takes around 10 - 15 minutes, from start to finish. Most patients feel fine to drive or go home on public transport afterwards.

What can I expect when I go home after the biopsy?

Whilst your mouth is **numb**, avoid eating any hot food or drinking hot liquids as these may burn the numb area, and take care not to accidentally bite the numb tissues.

When the local anaesthetic wears off after a few hours, the area is likely to be **sore** and uncomfortable, and this can last a couple of days. Painkillers such as paracetamol can help if you have discomfort or pain. You can expect some **swelling** and possibly **bruising** at the biopsy site.

There may be some **bleeding** at the time of the biopsy, but this typically stops very quickly and is rarely a problem. Sometimes, the biopsy site will bleed again when you get home. This can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for up to 20 minutes with a gauze swab or a rolled up clean handkerchief. It is normal to expect your saliva to be blood stained on the first day or so after your biopsy.

For the remainder of the day, you should **avoid rinsing** your mouth out vigorously as this may cause bleeding. You can clean your teeth as normal, including those teeth next to the site of the biopsy. Try to avoid smoking and alcohol for the rest of the day.

Starting on the day after the biopsy, you should rinse your mouth with warm salty water after each meal for 7 days.

You will be given written instructions after the procedure advising you on how to keep the biopsy site clean to prevent any **infection**.

You will also be given contact details when you leave the biopsy clinic. Please ring if you have any problems or queries.

When can I return to work?

This largely depends on your work and how you feel after the procedure. Most patients are able to return to work later the same day, but you should avoid any strenuous exercise as this may encourage bleeding from the biopsy site.

Will I need another appointment?

In most cases, you will need to return to the Oral Medicine department for the result to be given to you and so that treatment can be started, if applicable. This appointment will be made for you after the biopsy.

If you have any other questions or would like further explanation, please contact the Oral Medicine secretary on **0113 3434583 / 0113 3437930**.



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