

Oral (Mouth) 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.

What is a biopsy?

A biopsy is a procedure where a small piece of tissue is removed under local anaesthetic so that it can be examined under a microscope. The biopsy may aim to remove an area completely (an excision biopsy). This is usually only appropriate for small lumps or swellings. Occasionally only a small piece of an abnormal area is removed to confirm a diagnosis (an incisional biopsy).

How is it done?

In most cases biopsies are carried out under local anaesthesia (an injection into the area to numb it). The injection takes a couple of minutes to work and means that the biopsy will be painless. The biopsy usually leaves a small hole that often requires stitching. 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 little in the way of pain or swelling. Occasionally it is necessary to take simple painkillers (e.g., Paracetamol, Ibuprofen). Usually, any potential discomfort only lasts a few days.

Will there be much bleeding?

Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of biopsy this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched. Should the biopsy site bleed 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 handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact your surgeon.

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 later the same day.

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

Be careful not to bite numb areas of your mouth. On the day of surgery, you should avoid rinsing

your mouth vigorously as 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) commencing on the day after surgery.

Will I need another appointment?

The stitches will be removed after approx. one week. The results of the biopsy will be discussed with you.