

SKIN BIOPSY

WHAT IS A BIOPSY?

A biopsy means cutting a small full-thickness piece of skin from the area of symptoms. This can be examined under a microscope and in most cases an accurate diagnosis can be made.

Sometimes a biopsy does not provide an exact diagnosis, but usually there will be enough information to better guide treatment.

IS IT PAINFUL?

Local anaesthetic is injected with a needle as fine as a dentist's. There is an initial sting that quickly settles. After this, the procedure is pain free. The numbing will last about an hour.

AFTER THE BIOPSY

Bleeding is stopped usually by dabbing on an ointment, which leaves the area looking blackened. Don't be worried by the colour. The biopsy leaves a pit in the skin, like an ulcer, which normally heals quickly within 1 - 2 weeks.

By 6 weeks it is usually difficult to detect the area of the biopsy. Alternatively a stitch may be used. This will heal also by about 1 - 2 weeks and the stitch falls out by itself after about 2 weeks.

CARE OF THE SKIN

Infection and pain are normally controlled well enough by salt water baths or soaks. The moisture also encourages new skin growth.

Apply 1 fistful of salt to a shallow warm bath or 1/4 teaspoon of salt to a cup of water and soak for 10 - 15 minutes, 2 - 3 times a day for 5 - 7 days.

In addition you may be given:

- 2% xylocaine gel (local anaesthetic).
Useful, especially if there is discomfort with toileting.
Apply 5 minutes beforehand.
- Antibiotic ointment (apply with a cotton bud).
Use especially if there are long gaps between salt water bathing.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Can be started once the area is comfortable to touch.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Skin Biopsy. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.