

# Mouth biopsy

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## Information for patients

This leaflet answers some of the questions you may have about having a biopsy in your mouth. It explains the risks and the benefits and what to expect when you have the procedure. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to one of the doctors or dental nurses caring for you.

### Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

**If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.**

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

## What is a biopsy?

A biopsy is a simple way of helping us to diagnose an abnormal condition.

We remove a small piece of tissue from your mouth so it can be examined under a microscope. You may have stitches to help the area heal.

## Why do I need this procedure?

We often take a biopsy when we are not certain of the cause of a disease, or we do not know how far it has spread or exactly what it is like.

Sometimes, by doing a biopsy we completely remove the diseased area and so cure the problem.

## What happens before the procedure?

Your doctor or dentist will explain more about happens during the procedure and the likely result.

We will give you a local anaesthetic injection around the area which is being biopsied. This takes only a few minutes to work and numbs the area, so that you will not feel pain during the procedure.

Sometimes, we may also give you intravenous sedation. This involves having an injection in your arm, and makes you feel relaxed, sleepy and less aware of the procedure. If you are very anxious and frightened about having a biopsy, you can ask to be sedated.

## What are the benefits of the procedure?

A biopsy can help us to:

- diagnose many conditions to find out exactly what is wrong with you
- confirm a diagnosis that we already suspect because of other tests
- measure how serious your condition is.



## Where will I have the procedure?

You will have it in one of the clinics in the Oral Surgery Department at King's College Hospital Dental Institute.

## Do I need to prepare for the procedure?

You do not need to get ready for your biopsy. Take all your medications as normal and tell the dentist treating you the medicines you are taking. Eat and drink normally and do not miss meals.

It is important to discuss the procedure with your dentist so you know what to expect. You may want a friend or a relative to come with you.

### Consent

**We must by law obtain your consent for treatment. Your written consent is required for treatment under intravenous sedation. Staff will explain all the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to give consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to speak with a senior member of staff again.**

**You must confirm your consent for the procedure before treatment starts.**

## What happens during the procedure?

How we do your biopsy depends on the type of tissue sample we want and from where we take it.

**Scraping cells** – in some cases, simply taking a scraping of the surface layer of cells on the lining of your mouth gives us a big enough sample to be look at. This can be uncomfortable but not painful so you will not need an anaesthetic.

**Incisional biopsy** – this is a sample of the surface of the lining of your mouth which we use to diagnose mouth conditions. Your dental surgeon will use a small, sharp medical knife (scalpel) to remove a small amount of the surface lining of your mouth. They then stitch the wound back together. We will usually give you a local anaesthetic to numb the area.

**Needle biopsy** – this involves taking a sample of tissue from under the surface of your skin. To do this, your dental surgeon uses a special needle. They push it through your skin into the area which they want to look at and use it to suck out some tissue. We will usually give you a local anaesthetic to numb the area.

**Excision biopsy** – this involves surgery to remove a larger area of a tissue – usually a lump – which needs to be examined. We will usually give you a local anaesthetic and sometimes intravenous sedation as well. This type of biopsy will usually cure your problem.

**Bone biopsy** – we use this to diagnose abnormal conditions affecting your jaw bone. Your dental surgeon will take small sample of bone after making a small cut in your gum. They will then stitch the cut together.

## How long will the procedure take?

It depends on the type of biopsy you are having. Most take about 15 minutes.

## What happens after the procedure?

You may feel some discomfort when the anaesthetic wears off a few hours after the procedure. Your surgeon will give you some painkillers to relieve this.



You will be able to eat and drink normally after the biopsy, but please:

- avoid eating or drinking anything hot for the rest of the day and allow all meals and drinks to cool to room temperature
- do not rinse until the day after your biopsy. If you have an unpleasant taste in your mouth sip drinks to get rid of it
- rinse your mouth using a solution of hot salty water after every meal for the following seven days, starting 24 hours after the biopsy. Simply dissolve a teaspoon of table salt in a cup of warm water and rinse gently.
- Do not do any strenuous exercise for the rest of the day, either at work or during your leisure time.
- Your stitches will dissolve so they do not need to be removed. They normally take 10-14 days to disappear, although some might dissolve more quickly.

### **Do I need to take any time off work?**

Depending on the type of work you do and the biopsy you have had, you may prefer to take the rest of the day off.

### **Will I need any more appointments?**

We will ask you come back for a review appointment where your consultant will discuss with you the results of your biopsy. Please ensure that this is arranged for you before you leave the clinic.

### **Sharing your information**

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.



## Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleden Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at  
**[www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**