



Skin biopsy (post biopsy)

Information for patients
Dermatology Department



NORMAL WOUND HEALING

Following a skin biopsy, your wound may take a few weeks to heal. The size of the biopsy and your wound can also affect the healing time. During the healing process you may experience one or more of the following symptoms. These are considered normal:

- ❖ **Pain:** in the early stages you may have mild pain and discomfort - you can take regular painkillers such as paracetamol for a few days following the biopsy. You should avoid aspirin as it can promote bleeding. If the pain is severe and not responding to the painkillers, you should seek help from your GP or practice nurse.
- ❖ **Redness:** it is normal for the healing wound to remain pink or red for up to a few months after a biopsy. However, if severe pain is present with the redness, you should seek medical advice as this could indicate an infection.
- ❖ **Bleeding, oozing and crusting:** the wound may bleed slightly after the biopsy. A clean cloth or tissue applied firmly and consistently for 10-15 minutes should stop any bleeding. The wound might also ooze and crust intermittently for up to a week. Keep your wound clean and apply some Vaseline to ensure your skin remains moisturised.
- ❖ **Itching:** some patients experience itching around their wound which can be quite pronounced. This is a normal part of wound healing. You can use some regular Vaseline petroleum jelly to moisturise your skin and to ease the itch.
- ❖ **Sensation:** it is possible that after a biopsy your skin around the biopsy may feel different. You may experience some numbness for example. This usually improves with time.

- ❖ **Bruising:** you may experience a bruise where the biopsy was taken. This is not uncommon and usually settles over 2-3 weeks.
- ❖ **Reaction to the stitches:** you may experience a local reaction around a stitch that develops into a pus spot. This usually settles with cleansing. Sometimes it is necessary to release the stitch and allow the skin to heal. This may leave a slightly bigger scar as the skin then takes a bit longer to heal. Seek help from your own doctor or practice nurse if you are not sure what to do.
- ❖ **Scar:** every biopsy leaves a scar although we try to make this as small as possible. The red colour of the scar will fade with time. Depending on the site of the scar, some people may get a prominent raised scar (a hypertrophic or keloid scar). This is more common when the procedure is done on the upper back, chest or neck. In addition, scars can stretch over time especially in locations under tension such as the back.

COMPLICATIONS

There are some complications that can occur after a biopsy. These are:

- ❖ **Infection:** if the wound becomes fiery red, swollen, painful and discharges pus, you should seek medical help urgently as this is likely to represent an infection for which you may need an antibiotic.
- ❖ **Wound bursting:** rarely after the stitches are taken out or if there has been some infection, the wound may burst open. Stitches are not normally reapplied and the wound will heal itself provided it is kept dry, clean and covered with a clean dressing. The wound will take a bit longer to heal and may leave you with a slightly bigger scar. Sometimes it will be necessary for you to attend your practice nurse regularly to ensure the wound is healing properly and to have it re-dressed.

FOLLOWING YOUR BIOPSY TODAY:

- ❖ **Dressings:** keep any dressings in place for 24 hours after your biopsy. After this you can remove it and shower as normal. Keep the wound clean with warm soapy water and pat it dry gently. You do not need to reapply a dressing unless you personally wish to do so.
- ❖ **Stitches:** you have had stitches put in to close the wound. These should be removed in days. Please arrange this as soon as possible at your own GP practice with the treatment room nurse.
- ❖ **Results:** the results of the biopsy may take at least 6 weeks to come through and the results will be forwarded to your own doctor. You should check the result with your GP if you have not been given a follow-up appointment with the Dermatology Department.
- ❖ **Exercise:** you may find that some movements put stress on your wound that make it sore, more prone to ooze, bleed and could possibly make it burst. We would recommend you refrain from strenuous exercise for approximately two weeks to allow it to gain strength.

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www.careopinion.org.uk

If you are concerned or worried about your wound you should contact:

- ❖ Your GP
- ❖ NHS 24 - Tel: 111

If you need this information in another language or format, please e-mail: Translation.
Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

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