



Patient Information Leaflet **Oral (Mouth) Biopsy**

Cork University Dental
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain your biopsy and it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

What is a 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. The biopsy may aim to remove an area completely (an excisional biopsy). This is only suitable for small lumps or swellings. Sometimes 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 anaesthetic (an injection into the area to make it numb). The injection takes a couple of minutes to work and means that the biopsy will be painless. You will usually need some stitches afterwards. The stitches will dissolve by themselves in about two weeks. The whole process (local anaesthetic injection, biopsy and stitching) usually takes about 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 usually very little pain or swelling. You may need to take simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Usually any 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. If the biopsy site bleeds when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 10 minutes with a rolled up, damp handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop you should contact us.

When can I return to work?

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 out vigorously as this may cause bleeding. You should rinse the area gently with a mouthwash or warm salt water (a teaspoon of kitchen salt dissolved in a cup of warm water). You should clean your teeth normally, including those teeth next to the site of the biopsy.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>