

Skin Biopsy

AMBULATORY CARE:

A **skin biopsy** is a procedure used to remove a small piece of skin for testing. The type of biopsy you need will depend on the condition your healthcare provider wants to test for. Common conditions include cancer or precancer. A precancer growth is not cancer yet, but it could become cancer later. A skin condition such as eczema, rash, or a skin infection may also be reasons for a biopsy. You may need to have treatment depending on the results of the skin biopsy tests.

What will happen during your skin biopsy:

- Your healthcare provider will clean the skin where he or she will do the biopsy. He or she will use a local anesthetic medicine to make you more comfortable during your procedure. This medicine is a shot put into the skin that will numb the area, and dull your pain. You may still feel pressure or pushing during the procedure after you get this medicine.
- The procedure will depend on the type of biopsy you have:
 - A **punch biopsy** is used to take the whole thickness of a small, round piece of skin. The punch tool will be placed on the area where the skin sample will be taken. Your healthcare provider will move and press the punch downward to cut the skin. Once the skin is loosened, your healthcare provider will pull it up, and cut it out. Stitches are used to close the wound.
 - A **shave biopsy** is used to scrape off a top layer of skin. Your healthcare provider will first inject medicine into your skin. This will cause the area to be raised. Your provider will use a blade or other tool to scrape or shave off the raised area of skin.
 - An **excisional biopsy** is used if you have a growth or sore that needs to be tested for cancer. Your healthcare provider will cut the growth off the skin. Layers of skin and fat may be taken. The area will be closed with stitches.
 - An **incisional biopsy** is also used to test for cancer, but only part of a growth or sore is removed. Your healthcare provider will cut part of the growth out. The area may need to be closed with stitches.
- Your healthcare provider may put medicine on your wound to stop the area from bleeding. The skin sample will be sent to a lab for tests.

What will happen after your skin biopsy: A bandage will cover the biopsy area to keep it clean and dry. The bandage will help to protect the area from infection. When the procedure is over, you may be able to go home. You may have some bleeding, oozing, redness, or swelling

after the biopsy. These are normal. You may also have pain during the first 24 to 48 hours after your procedure.

Risks of a skin biopsy: A skin biopsy may cause you to bleed from the biopsy area, or get an infection. You may have bruising, swelling, or pain in the area where the biopsy was done. You may have scarring from where the skin tissue was removed. You are at higher risk of having problems healing after your procedure if you smoke, or take steroid medicines. You may have an allergic response from the numbing medicine used for the procedure.

Seek care immediately if:

- You have red lines on your skin coming from your wound area.
- Blood soaks through your bandage.

Contact your healthcare provider if:

- You have a fever.
- You have increased swelling, redness, or bleeding from your wound.
- You have pain that does not go away, or is not helped by pain medicines.
- You have pus in the wound, or yellow or green drainage coming out of your wound.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

Medicines: You **may** need any of the following:

- **NSAIDs**, such as ibuprofen, help decrease swelling, pain, and fever. This medicine is available with or without a doctor's order. NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in certain people. If you take blood thinner medicine, **always** ask your healthcare provider if NSAIDs are safe for you. Always read the medicine label and follow directions.
- **Acetaminophen** decreases pain and fever. It is available without a doctor's order. Ask how much to take and how often to take it. Follow directions. Read the labels of all other medicines you are using to see if they also contain acetaminophen, or ask your doctor or pharmacist. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage if not taken correctly. Do not use more than 4 grams (4,000 milligrams) total of acetaminophen in one day.
- **Prescription pain medicine** may be given. Ask your healthcare provider how to take this medicine safely. Some prescription pain medicines contain acetaminophen. Do not take other medicines that contain acetaminophen without talking to your healthcare provider. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver damage. Prescription pain medicine may cause constipation. Ask your healthcare provider how to prevent or treat constipation.

- **Take your medicine as directed.** Contact your healthcare provider if you think your medicine is not helping or if you have side effects. Tell him or her if you are allergic to any medicine. Keep a list of the medicines, vitamins, and herbs you take. Include the amounts, and when and why you take them. Bring the list or the pill bottles to follow-up visits. Carry your medicine list with you in case of an emergency.

Wound care: Check the wound for signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or pus. Carefully wash the wound with soap and water. Dry the area and put on new, clean bandages as directed. Change your bandages when they get wet or dirty.

Follow up with your healthcare provider or dermatologist as directed: You may need to return to have your stitches removed. The results of the biopsy are usually ready within 10 days of the procedure. Write down your questions so you remember to ask them during your visits.