

Skin Biopsy (Adult)

What is a skin biopsy?

A skin biopsy is one of the tests requested by the Metabolic Consultants to diagnose certain metabolic disorders. Some metabolic conditions can only be diagnosed by carrying out a skin biopsy. It is a quick procedure where a small piece of skin is removed and sent for testing. The biopsy will be carried out in the Outpatient's Department or as part of tests carried out when you are in hospital.

What happens to the skin sample?

The skin sample is placed in a special tube and sent immediately to a specialist laboratory in England. The sample is tested for abnormalities in the DNA or to determine the presence or absence of specific chemical reactions.

How is a skin biopsy done?

Before the biopsy is taken the doctor/nurse will explain what will happen and answer any questions you may have and ask you to sign a consent form. Please tell the doctor / nurse if you have any allergies or if you are taking any medication.

The test may leave a slight scar similar to a chicken pox mark. The biopsy will be taken from the inside of your upper arm. Local anaesthetic cream which will be applied to this area for 45-90 minutes to numb it before the biopsy is taken. You may find it more comfortable to lie down during the test as it is important that you do not move.

How long does it take?

After the cream is removed, the procedure takes 3 minutes. Taking the piece of skin lasts 5 seconds.

Will it be painful afterwards?

The local anaesthetic cream will wear off in 4 hours. After this, you can take paracetamol or Ibuprofen (brufen/nurofen) as directed by your doctor or as instructed by your pharmacist. Usually, there is very little pain afterwards. Unless you are staying in hospital for more testing you can go home when the biopsy is taken.

What care does the site of the skin biopsy need at home?

This dressing should be left on for 3 days unless it becomes wet, dirty or soiled. If this happens wash your hands before and after reapplying a new dressing. When washing, avoid wetting the dressing. After 3 days remove the dressing and wash as normal. Apply a normal plaster for a few days after this. Your biopsy site should have healed within 10 days.

Check your biopsy site for any signs of infection listed below;

- Redness
- Swelling
- Pain / soreness not going away or getting worse
- Ooze (it is normal to see a little bit of blood coming through the dressing immediately after the skin biopsy is taken)
- Soreness
- Itching
- High temperature or generally feeling unwell. This may not be due to the skin biopsy but if you visit your GP tell them about your skin biopsy.

If you notice any of the signs above please visit your GP or contact the Metabolic Out Patients to speak to a doctor or nurse Monday - Thursday 8.30am- 4.30pm and 8.30am - 2pm Friday 01 878 4317

How long will the results take?

Because of the type of tests carried out it can take more than 10 weeks for results. Sometimes a biopsy may be sent to another laboratory. This will delay the over-all results for a number of weeks. However, if a diagnosis is found during these stages, your doctor will contact you.



Author: Eilish O' Connell Version: 3
Approval Date: June 2018
Review Date: June 2020
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