

What is it?

A skin biopsy is a quick and simple procedure that removes a small sample of skin for testing. It usually takes place in your doctor's office. You may need a skin biopsy to help your doctor diagnose diseases such as skin cancer, infection or other skin condition.

Your tissue sample will be sent to a lab, where a pathologist will examine it and report back to your doctor. Types of skin biopsy include:

- **Shave biopsy** – a smaller sample of skin is shaved off using a razor-like instrument
- **Punch biopsy** – your GP takes a tissue sample using small device that works a bit like a hole punch
- **Excision biopsy** – a skin lesion, such as skin cancer, is removed along with some surrounding skin

Stitches are sometimes required after a skin biopsy.

What do I need to do before the procedure?

You do not need to do anything to prepare for the procedure.

What will happen?

Your doctor will give a local anaesthetic to numb the area. They will use a small metal device (such as a scalpel or razor) to remove a small piece of tissue from the area. Your results will be available in about a week.

Sometimes, you may need stitches to close the wound and help it heal. Your GP will discuss how to care for the skin after the biopsy and may ask you to come back in to discuss the results and remove any stitches.

What can I expect after?

There are no after-effects from the procedure. If you experience pain at the excision site, you can take over the counter pain medication to help.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will discuss what your skin biopsy involves and how to care for the skin after the biopsy. Your doctor will give a local anaesthetic to numb the area. They will use a small metal device (such as a scalpel or razor) to remove a small piece of tissue from the area. Sometimes, you may need stitches to close the wound and help it heal. Your results will be available in about a week.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you again to discuss the results of your biopsy. They may also need to remove any stitches. If you need follow-up medical appointments, your GP will help arrange these.

What can I do?

Care for the biopsy site as directed by your GP. If you are concerned about anything, speak to your GP. Try not to worry, and distract yourself by keeping busy while you wait for the results.

Skin biopsy



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What happens to my biopsy sample?*
- Will it hurt?*
- Will it leave a scar?*
- When will I find out the results?*



What supports are available?

Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department

The Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department provides a broad range of skin services with specialist dermatologists. With staff specialising in common and rare skin diseases, the team offer treatment for all ages, from newborns to the elderly and pregnant women. As your GP for a referral.

Where can I learn more?

- **Better Health Channel** – biopsy: betterhealth.gov.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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