

MF10 Oral Biopsy

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What is an oral biopsy?

An oral biopsy involves removing small pieces of tissue from the inside of the mouth.

Your surgeon has suggested an oral biopsy. However, it is your decision to go ahead with the procedure or not. This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you to make an informed decision.

If you have any questions that this document does not answer, it is important that you ask your surgeon or the healthcare team. Once all your questions have been answered and you feel ready to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to give your consent. This is the final step in the decision-making process. However, you can still change your mind at any point.

What are the benefits of an oral biopsy?

Your surgeon is concerned that an area in your mouth may look abnormal (such as a white patch) or may be causing you problems (such as a lump, ulcer or painful area). An oral biopsy is a good way of finding out if there is a problem.

The tissue that your surgeon removes will be examined under a microscope to help make the diagnosis or help your surgeon recommend the best treatment for you.

If the biopsy is normal, your surgeon will reassure you.

Are there any alternatives to an oral biopsy?

Other investigations such as blood tests may show that you have a problem but a biopsy can help to find out exactly what is causing the problem.

What will happen if I decide not to have an oral biopsy?

Your surgeon may not be able to confirm what the problem is. If you decide not to have a biopsy, you should discuss this carefully with your surgeon.

What does the procedure involve?

Before the procedure

If you take warfarin, clopidogrel or other blood-thinning medication, let your surgeon know at least 7 days before the procedure.

The healthcare team will carry out a number of checks to make sure you have the procedure you came in for and on the correct side. You can help by confirming to your surgeon and the healthcare team your name and the procedure you are having.

Your surgeon will ask you to give your consent once you have read this document and they have answered your questions.



A small sample may be removed with a scalpel



A circular blade may be used

In the treatment room

The procedure is usually performed using a local anaesthetic injected into your mouth. This stings for a moment but will make it numb, allowing your surgeon to take samples without causing too much discomfort. Your surgeon will only begin the operation when both of you are satisfied that the local anaesthetic is working.

They may offer you a sedative to help you to relax. They will give it to you through a small tube in your arm or the back of your hand. If you have the sedative you will be able to ask and answer questions but you will feel relaxed.

An oral biopsy usually takes about 15 minutes.

There are two types of oral biopsy.

- Incisional biopsy, where your surgeon removes a small piece from the abnormal area of tissue. This is then examined to help decide if you need any further treatment.
- Excisional biopsy, where your surgeon removes all of the area of abnormal tissue. This is often used for very small areas of tissue or lumps that are in one part of the mouth.

Your surgeon will remove the tissue using a small blade. They will usually close the wound with dissolvable stitches.

What should I do about my medication?

Make sure your healthcare team know about all the medication you take and follow their advice. This includes all blood-thinning medication as well as herbal and complementary remedies, dietary supplements, and medication you can buy over the counter.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Your surgeon may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is high or low for you.

The possible complications of an oral biopsy are listed below. Some complications can be serious. You should ask your surgeon if there is anything you do not understand.

- Bleeding after the operation. Your surgeon will tell you how to stop the bleeding.
- Infection. This is rare. Your wound may be painful and take longer to heal. You may need antibiotics or further treatment. Do not take antibiotics unless you are told you need them.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication. The healthcare team are trained to detect and treat any reactions that might happen. Let your doctor know if you have any allergies or if you have reacted to any medication or tests in the past.

Covid-19

Coming into hospital increases your risk of catching or passing on Covid-19 (coronavirus) as you will be around more people than usual. This risk increases further if the procedure involves your nose or throat. Practise social distancing and hand washing and wear a face covering when required.

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain. The local anaesthetic should help to keep you comfortable. If you have any pain during the procedure, let your surgeon know. Any pain is

easily controlled with simple painkillers such as paracetamol and usually settles within a few days.

- Swelling around the biopsy site. This is usually only mild and settles within a few days.

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home straight after the procedure. However, your surgeon may recommend that you stay a little longer.

You will usually recover feeling in your mouth after a few hours. You should be able to go home straight away. Depending on your job, you should be able to go back to work later the same day.

Before you go home the healthcare team will explain to you how to care for your wound.

If you are worried about anything, in hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

Returning to normal activities

If you had sedation :

- a responsible adult should take you home in a car or taxi and stay with you for at least 24 hours;
- you should be near a telephone in case of an emergency;
- do not drive, operate machinery or do any potentially dangerous activities (this includes cooking) for at least 24 hours and not until you have fully recovered feeling, movement and co-ordination; and
- do not sign legal documents or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours.

It is normal for your saliva to be bloodstained for the rest of the day. If your wound starts to bleed, apply pressure to the area for 10 minutes using a clean, damp, rolled-up handkerchief or a swab. If the bleeding does not stop, contact the healthcare team.

Do not eat or drink until the local anaesthetic has worn off, and then eat only soft food until your mouth feels comfortable. Avoid chewing directly on the wound for 4 hours after the procedure. Do not rinse your mouth out for the rest of the day as this may cause the wound to start bleeding. You can brush your teeth as normal in the evening after the procedure. The day after the procedure, rinse

your mouth with warm salty water after every meal.

Avoid intense physical activity for the rest of the day. Do not smoke or drink alcohol for 2 days after the procedure.

Any stitches will dissolve after 4 weeks. If they come out within 3 days of the procedure, contact the healthcare team so they can advise you what to do.

The future

The healthcare team will tell you when you need to come back to the clinic. The tissue that your surgeon removed will have been examined under a microscope. Your surgeon will tell you the results, check your wound, and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Summary

An oral biopsy is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if there is a problem in your mouth. However, complications can happen. You need to know about them to help you to make an informed decision about the procedure. Knowing about them will also help to detect and treat any problems early.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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