

This document will give you information about a punch biopsy of a skin lesion. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a punch biopsy?

A punch biopsy involves removing a small piece of skin using a circular blade called a punch (see figure 1).

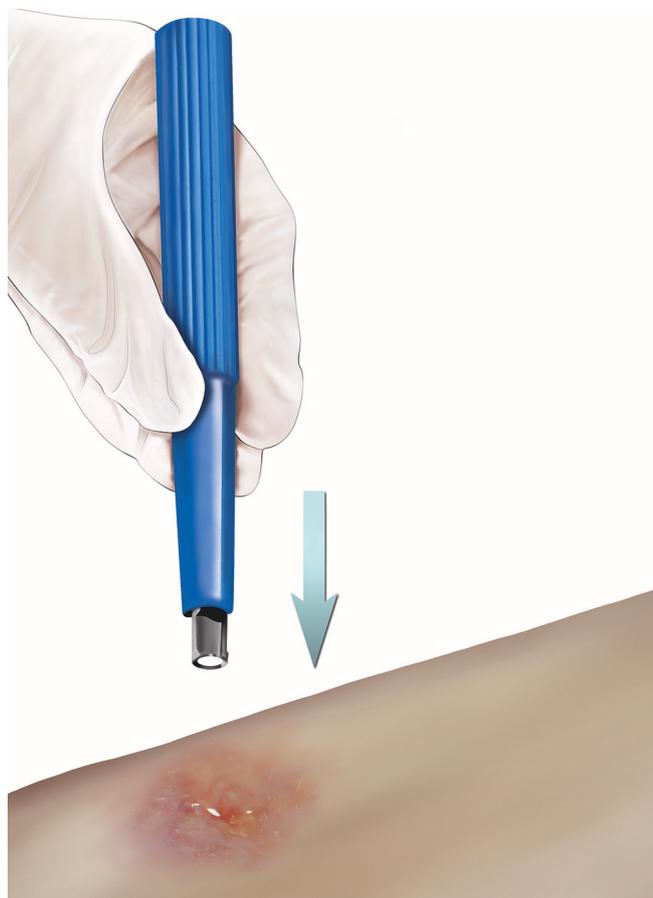


Figure 1
A punch biopsy

Your doctor may be concerned about a skin lesion, which is a lump or spot on or just below your skin, or they may need to confirm the cause of a skin rash or eruption.

What are the benefits of a punch biopsy?

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

If the biopsy is normal, the healthcare team will reassure you.

Are there any alternatives to a punch biopsy?

A blood test or scan may give more information and show that you have a problem. However, a biopsy will help to find out exactly what is causing the problem.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure is performed under a local anaesthetic and usually takes 10 to 15 minutes. Your doctor will stretch your skin to make it easier to use the punch to remove a sample of tissue. The amount of tissue removed is usually less than 4 millimetres in diameter and about 1.5 millimetres deep.

They will either close the hole with stitches or use a dressing.

What complications can happen?

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Wound breakdown, if the hole fails to heal

How soon will I recover?

You may need to lie down and raise the area where the biopsy was performed. This reduces the risk of bleeding. After a short while you will be able to go home.

You should be able to return to work the next day unless you are told otherwise.

Do not have a hot bath for two to three days. Do not do strenuous exercise for the first week and not until the biopsy area has healed.

The healthcare team may arrange for you to come back to the clinic for the results of the biopsy. They will discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

A punch biopsy is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if there is a problem with your skin.

Acknowledgements

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