

Punch Biopsy Aftercare

What is a punch biopsy?

A punch biopsy is a very common investigation used in dermatology to take a sample of skin for analysis. A circular coring device is used, like a mini-apple corer, to remove a cylinder of skin. Usually the skin is closed with a non-dissolving suture to leave a 4mm straight line.

What it used for?

Biopsies are used to diagnose difficult rashes and confirm skin cancers.

What happens after the procedure?

The biopsy site will be covered by a waterproof dressing and you are advised to keep this in place until suture removal. The anaesthetic will last a couple of hours. There may be some pain after this and taking paracetamol before the anaesthetic wears off, and regularly for the first day, may help.

Does it leave a scar?

Yes. All surgical procedures will leave a mark on the skin. This is usually a slightly pink 4mm line to start with and will fade to leave a white line. Rarely a thickened scar (keloid) may form. If you have had problems with scars before please inform the doctor.

Do I need to do anything after the procedure?

A dressing is normally used to cover the wound and it is best for this to stay in place until suture removal. Most dressings are showerproof but they should not be immersed in water (bathing/swimming) as this will lead to maceration of the skin and increase the risk of infection. If the dressing does get soaked, please remove the dressing, pat the area dry and replace with a new dry dressing.

If you have a suture this will need to be removed 7-10 days after the procedure. This can either be arranged with the nurses at the private hospital or with your local practice nurse - this will need to be booked with your general practice.

Can I get the area wet?

It is best to keep the area dry.

Is it likely to get infected?

Wound infections are uncommon. If redness develops in the surrounding skin or the wound suddenly becomes much more painful then you may need some treatment for a wound infection.

How long does it take for results to come back?

Results take 1 week for routine biopsies. If special stains are required this may take a further week. Biopsies for the investigation of hair conditions take 4-6 weeks.

