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## Having a biopsy

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### West Wing Clinical Research Facility

#### Patient Information





## **What is a biopsy?**

A biopsy is when a small sample of tissue is removed from your tumour with a needle. The sample may be required as part of a clinical trial. The specific area biopsied will be decided by your Medical and Radiology team.

## **What are the risks of having a biopsy?**

There may be bruising or a small swelling around the biopsy area due to bleeding into the skin. This should not be painful and will heal.

There is a small risk of internal bleeding after the biopsy. If you take aspirin or warfarin, or if you have a bleeding disorder, there is a greater chance of bleeding from the biopsy site. Please let us know if you take any of these medications as you may need to stop taking them ahead of the procedure.

We will monitor you after the biopsy and may ask you to stay at the hospital for up to four hours afterwards.

## **Who will perform the biopsy?**

A radiology doctor will perform the biopsy. This is someone who is specially trained to perform biopsies using scanning equipment which will ensure the biopsy needle is accurately placed into your tissue.

## **Consenting to biopsy procedure**

In addition to signing the trial consent form, you will need to sign a specific consent form for the biopsy procedure.

This is an agreement showing that you have understood the benefits and risks. If there is anything that you do not understand or are concerned about, please tell the staff looking after you.

## How can I prepare for the procedure?

You will need to have a blood test within the previous week to check your haematology and clotting. This test is necessary as there is an increased risk of bleeding after a biopsy. Your key worker will arrange the test for you.

Do not have anything to eat and drink (except water) for six hours before the procedure. You can sip small amounts of water up to **four hours** before the procedure.

You will need to arrange for someone to take you to hospital and collect you the same day as it is not recommended that you drive yourself. Therefore you will need to arrange for either a taxi or ask someone else to drive you home. If you do take a taxi home, a responsible adult should still accompany you in case you feel unwell during the journey.

## What happens before the biopsy?

Please arrive 30 minutes before your appointment time at the West Wing Clinical Research Centre, Sutton (located on the first floor). A staff nurse will take your observations and place a cannula in your arm. A member of your medical team or the radiologist performing the procedure will ask you to sign the consent form for the biopsy.

## What happens during the biopsy?

We will ask you to change into a hospital gown and lie down so that you will be comfortable whilst the biopsy is being performed.

Your biopsy will be performed under ultrasound guidance. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and a local anaesthetic will be injected around the area from where the biopsy will be taken. This will numb the area so that you will not feel any pain.

The radiologist will then use a special core needle to remove a small piece of tissue. Several biopsy cores may be required for the clinical trial. The biopsy site will then be cleaned and it will be covered with a dressing.

### **Will I feel any pain?**

The procedure should be pain free. However the position in which you are asked to lie may be uncomfortable for a short period. If you do experience any pain during the procedure, please let the team know so that they can increase the local anaesthetic. A nurse will be with you throughout the procedure and will provide pain relief should you need it. We recommend you do not take any paracetamol for four hours before the procedure so that this can be administered intravenously (directly through the vein) if needed.

### **What happens after the biopsy?**

Once the biopsy is completed and the wound has been dressed, you will remain on the unit for two to four hours dependant on the area that has been biopsied. Your blood pressure and pulse will be monitored regularly. This will allow the nursing team to assess your recovery.

You will not be able to eat and drink for one hour after the biopsy. However, when this period is over, we will provide a drink and a light meal before you are discharged. One of the medical team staff will assess you before discharge to ensure there are no issues.

The nurses will also advise when you are able to get up and mobilise. They will ensure that you are collected from the unit by the responsible adult who you have chosen to accompany you.

### **At home – aftercare of your wound**

Once the anaesthetic has worn off, you may experience some discomfort. Please take a couple of paracetamol if you experience some discomfort at home.

You must keep your dressing/wound dry for three days. The dressing to your wound can be taken off on the third day after your biopsy (there are no sutures to be removed).

If you usually take aspirin, you can resume taking it the day after your biopsy.

Bruising around the biopsy site should start to heal after 48 hours. Please call your team if you experience any further issues with your wound, for example if it becomes painful, red or does not heal.

**You must have somebody at home with you for the first 24 hours following the biopsy.**

## Contact details

If you have any problems or concerns following discharge, please contact us.

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899**  
(Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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