

What is a Biopsy and What Can I Expect?

- A biopsy is sometimes performed if a lesion appears unusual or suspicious.
- A small part of the lesion (2-3mm diameter) will be removed under local anaesthetic for study by a pathologist to help make the diagnosis. This usually takes one week to analyse. Local anaesthetic can be uncomfortable initially, but is safe in pregnancy, works in seconds and lasts 2-3 hours.
- Most biopsies do not require stitches (unless bleeding is slow to stop) and will normally be covered by a band aid or a dressing.
- The dressing can be fully removed after 24 hours, cleaned with antiseptic and then left open to form a small scab. You may decide to continue covering the biopsy site with regular bandaids in case of delayed bleeding, friction or heavy/dirty work duties. Please keep dry. The scab will usually fall off in about one week. Any stitches are to be removed in a week. Minor scarring can occur on rare occasion.
- Any pain can be treated with 2 paracetamol tablets (avoid aspirin) every 4 hours.
- Delayed bleeding is best stopped by pressure & elevation for 10 minutes.
- If the biopsy is positive for skin cancer, then it will usually need an excision. Sometimes, for various reasons, a doctor may proceed straight to the excision.