

# YOUNG DERMATOLOGY

## SKIN BIOPSY INFORMATION AND POST PROCEDURE CARE

### INSTRUCTIONS

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#### **What to expect during the procedure**

Depending on the location of the biopsy, you may need to undress and change into a clean gown. Your skin may be marked with a gentian violet skin marking pen to outline the biopsy area. The area of the skin to be biopsied will be cleaned. You will then receive a local anesthetic to numb the biopsy site. This is usually accomplished by injection with a thin needle. The local anesthetic can cause a burning sensation in the skin for a few seconds. After that, you should not feel any pain or discomfort during the skin biopsy. A skin biopsy typically takes approximately 15 minutes to perform, including the preparation time, dressing the wound and instructions for at-home care.

#### **Shave biopsy**

For a shave biopsy, your doctor uses a sharp tool, a dermablade (similar to a razor blade) or a scalpel to cut the tissue. The depth of the incision depends on the depth of the lesion being sampled, and the part of the body being biopsied. A shave biopsy may cause bleeding, although minor. Bleeding is usually stopped by a combination of applying a medication (aluminum chloride solution or Drysol), pressure to the area and/or electrocautery (using an electrically heated needle to seal the blood vessels).

#### **Punch biopsy**

For a punch biopsy, your doctor uses a round 'cookie-cutter' blade to remove the entire thickness of the skin, which may involve the top layer of fat beneath the skin, so stitches are needed to stop bleeding and to close the wound. A pressure dressing or adhesive bandage is then placed over the site to protect the wound from contamination and prevent bleeding.

#### **After the biopsy**

Please keep the bandage applied over the biopsy site for 24 to 48 hours. You may remove the dressing the next day. Rarely, the biopsy site may bleed after you leave our office. (This may be more likely if you are taking a blood thinning medication such as aspirin, coumadin/warfarin or Plavix/clopidogrel or Eliquis/apixaban, fish oil or vitamin E.) If you have any bleeding, apply direct, firm, continuous pressure to the wound with a clean gauze pad for at least 15 minutes. If the bleeding doesn't stop, repeat this step. If the bleeding still hasn't stopped after repeating this step, please contact our office immediately at the number below (during our clinic hours) or proceed to the nearest Emergency Room (after clinic hours).

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All biopsies may cause a small scar. Rarely, some people may develop a prominent, raised scar (called a keloid or hypertrophic scar). Keloids are abnormal scars which grow continuously, beyond the borders of the original procedure site and may be itchy, painful or tender to touch. The risk of this is increased when a biopsy is performed in high tension areas on the neck or upper torso, such as the back or chest. Initially, a usual scar will be pink in color and then fade to white, sometimes brown. Scars fade gradually and may take up to one to two years to mature, while collagen remodeling occurs. Thus, the scar's permanent color will be evident one to two years after the biopsy. Please avoid minor trauma or bumping the biopsy area and activities that may stretch the skin. Stretching the skin could cause the wound to bleed or split open (a complication known as wound dehiscence) and may enlarge the scar. Healing of the wound can take several weeks, but is usually complete within two months. Wounds on the legs and feet tend to heal slower than those on other areas of the body, as a result of underlying circulation issues and level of activity.

### **How to care for the biopsy site**

1. Wash your hands with fragrance-free soap and water before you touch the biopsy site.
2. Wash the biopsy site with soap and water. If the biopsy site is on your scalp, use shampoo.
3. Rinse the site well with lukewarm water, under gentle water pressure (like gentle rain drops)
4. Pat the site dry gently with a clean towel.
5. Apply Vaseline to the biopsy site.
6. Cover the site with an adhesive bandage that allows the skin to ventilate (a bandage such as Band-Aid®).
7. Continue caring for the biopsy site daily until the stitches are removed (if a punch biopsy was performed). For shave biopsies that don't require stitches, continue wound care until the skin is healed.
8. Don't use scented soap, makeup, or lotion on the treated area until it has healed. This will usually be at least 7-14 days after your procedure.
9. You may lose some hair on the treated area. This depends on how deep the biopsy was. The hair loss may be permanent.
10. Once the treated area has healed, apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 to the area to protect it from scarring or discoloration.
11. You may have discoloration (pinkness, redness, or lighter or darker skin) at the treated area for up to 1 year after your procedure. Some people may have it for even longer or it may be permanent.

**Suture removal**

If a punch biopsy was performed, please return to clinic for suture removal in 7-10 days if the procedure was performed on the face and scalp, and 12-14 days if the procedure was performed on the neck, trunk, arms and legs.

**Please call our office if You Have:**

- A temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Any of the following symptoms at or around the treated area:
  - Redness or swelling that extends to areas of untreated skin
  - Increasing pain or discomfort in the treated area
  - Skin in the treated area that's hot or hard to the touch
  - Increasing oozing, or drainage (yellow or green) from the treated area
  - A bad smell
  - Bleeding that doesn't stop after applying pressure
- Any questions or concerns
- Any problems you didn't expect