



PATIENT EDUCATION: SKIN BIOPSY

Q: What is a skin biopsy? (bi-op-see)

- A:**
- A skin biopsy is when a small sample of your skin is removed for testing.
 - The skin sample is sent to a lab to see if there are any signs of cancer or other diseases.
 - Your Primary Care Provider (PCP) may suggest a skin biopsy if you have lumps, sores or spots on your skin that may be growing, changing color, or bleeding.

Q: How is the biopsy done?

- A:**
- Before the biopsy is done, your PCP will tell you why it is being suggested and what it involves. If you do not want the biopsy done, you do not have to sign the consent and the biopsy will not be done.
 - If you agree and sign the consent for the test, your PCP will choose the best area to take the sample from based on what part of your skin he/she is concerned about.
 - The area to be tested will be cleaned and a numbing medicine will be injected under your skin. The effect of the numbing medicine will last around 30 minutes, which is longer than the biopsy takes to complete. ***If you are allergic to numbing medicine or anesthetic, make sure you tell your PCP.***
 - When your skin is numb, your PCP will take the skin sample in one of three ways:
 - Punch biopsy- a round piece of skin smaller than an eraser on a pencil is cut and removed
 - Shave biopsy- if there is a growth that is above the skin, the top of it may be shaved off with a sharp blade.
 - Excisional biopsy- your PCP may decide to take out the entire growth by cutting all the way around it in the shape of a tiny football.
 - Pressure, medicines, or stitches may be used to control any bleeding.

Q: Are there risks with skin biopsies?

- A:**
- You may be allergic to the numbing medicine
 - The biopsy may miss another place where there is cancer
 - You may have a scar, bleeding, loss of skin color, or loss of hair at the biopsy site
 - The biopsy site can become infected
 - You may have pain at the biopsy site for a few days that usually responds to aspirin, ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

Q: What will happen after my skin biopsy?

- A:**
- A dressing will be applied to the wound with an ointment to keep it moist. This will be covered by a bandage.
 - You should change the bandage and dressing three or four times a day, and remove scabs that may form over the biopsy site so it can heal from the inside out.
 - Your PCP will send the skin sample to the lab to be looked at under the microscope to see if there are any signs of skin cancer or any other disease.

