

Surgical Biopsy



What is a surgical biopsy?

A biopsy is when tissue samples are removed from your body and checked under a microscope for signs of damage or disease. It can be done to look for cancer. But it may be done for other reasons. A biopsy can be done in many ways.

Why might I need a surgical biopsy?

Your healthcare team may do a biopsy to rule out or confirm cancer or another condition. It offers healthcare providers a chance to get a closer look at the tissue. Then they can find out exactly what they are dealing with.

Biopsies may be done using:

- A needle to take the sample
- An endoscope. This is a thin, flexible tube with a light and camera on it. It lets the healthcare provider look at the tissue and take a sample.
- A vacuum device to take the tissue from the body and gather it in a probe

But in some cases, your healthcare provider may not be able to get a good sample from these procedures. Or the results might not be clear. Your healthcare provider may then decide to do a surgical biopsy. This is more like a regular surgery. The healthcare provider needs to make a cut (incision) to take out a sample.

The healthcare provider may do an incisional or an excisional surgical biopsy

- **Incisional biopsy.** The goal is to take only a small sample of tissue or tumor. The provider takes just enough tissue to make the diagnosis.
- **Excisional biopsy.** The goal is to remove all of the suspicious tissue or tumor. This makes it the most invasive form of biopsy. But it also gets the best sample to test. You may also worry less, knowing that the abnormal tissue may have been taken out of your body.

What are the risks of a surgical biopsy?

Like any surgery, a biopsy has some risks. These include:

- Infection
- Pain at the site of the biopsy
- A lot of bleeding during or after the biopsy
- Affected body part may look different afterward

There may be other risks, depending on your health problem. Discuss any concerns with your healthcare provider before the procedure.

How do I get ready for a surgical biopsy?

A surgical biopsy is generally done on an outpatient basis. This means you go home the same day. What to do before the biopsy depends on the type of biopsy you will have. Check with your healthcare provider about the medicines you take. Follow any directions you are given for not eating or drinking before the procedure.

Based on your condition and type of biopsy, your healthcare provider may give you other directions.

What happens during a surgical biopsy?

A surgical biopsy often will be done in a hospital. It will follow these steps:

- You will wear a hospital gown and lie on an operating table.
- You will be given a local pain reliever (anesthetic) at the site of the biopsy. This is a medicine used to make the area numb.
- You may also be given medicine to make you drowsy.
- The provider will make the cut.
- They will remove the suspicious tissue. The provider will also remove a border of healthy tissue.
- Once the tissue sample or tumor is removed, the healthcare provider will close the cut. A bandage will be applied.
- You may need to be watched for a short period of time before you can go home. This depends on what medicine you were given before the test. If you were given any type of sedation, you will need to have someone drive you home.

What happens after a surgical biopsy?

After the biopsy, your healthcare provider will send the tissue to a lab for review. The lab will send a report to the provider in a few days to a week. The next course of action will depend on the lab report.

You may feel some mild pain at the surgical site as it heals. You may need medicine to control this pain. You may be told not to let the incision get wet for a few days. You may be given other care directions. Don't do any heavy lifting. Take it easy until you're feeling back to normal. Let your healthcare provider know if you have any signs of infection. Also tell your provider if you have severe pain, fever, or bleeding.

Next steps

Before you agree to the test or procedure make sure you know:

- The name of the test or procedure
- The reason you are having the test or procedure
- What results to expect and what they mean
- The risks and benefits of the test or procedure
- What the possible side effects or complications are
- When and where you are to have the test or procedure
- Who will do the test or procedure and what that person's qualifications are
- What would happen if you did not have the test or procedure
- Any alternative tests or procedures to think about
- When and how you will get the results
- Who to call after the test or procedure if you have questions or problems
- How much you will have to pay for the test or procedure

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