

Experts in Skin & Hair

Punch Biopsy

What is a punch biopsy?

A punch biopsy is a very common investigation used in dermatology to take a sample of skin for analysis. A circular coring device is used, like a mini-apple corer, to remove a cylinder of skin. Usually the skin is closed with a suture to leave a 4mm straight line.

What it used for?

Biopsies are used to diagnose difficult rashes and confirm skin cancers.

Does it hurt?

A punch biopsy is carried out under a local anaesthetic, an injection into the skin that numbs the area. You may have had local anaesthetic before a dental procedure. The anesthetic stings for 10-20 seconds and then you should feel no pain. If you have ever experienced problems before with local anaesthetic please inform the doctor.

Does it leave a scar?

Yes. All surgical procedures will leave a mark on the skin. This is usually a slightly pink 4mm line to start with and will fade to leave a white line. Rarely a thickened scar (keloid) may form. If you have had problems with scars before please inform the doctor.

Do I need to do anything after the procedure?

The anaesthetic will last a couple of hours. There may be some pain after this. Taking paracetamol before the anaesthetic wears off, and regularly for the first day, may help. A dressing is normally used to cover the wound and it is best for this to stay in place until suture removal.

If you have a suture this will need to be removed 7-10 days after the procedure. This can either be arranged with the nurses at the private hospital or with your local practice nurse - this will need to be booked with your general practice.

How long does it take for results to come back?

Results take 1 week for routine biopsies. If special stains are required this may take a further week. Biopsies for the investigation of hair conditions take 4-6 weeks.

