

You need a biopsy



What a biopsy is and why it is necessary

A biopsy is a minor surgical procedure in which a small portion of your tumour is sampled so that it may be analysed by a qualified pathologist. This is one of the investigations that is necessary in order to establish a precise diagnosis and to determine the best course of treatment during a meeting of the multidisciplinary tumor board (TB).

How does a biopsy proceed ?

There are three different ways to undergo a biopsy :

- 1- At the outpatient orthopedic clinic during an appointment
- 2- Under CT-scan at the radiology department
- 3- In the operating room

Biopsy at the outpatient clinic

You are going to undergo a biopsy at the outpatient orthopedic clinic; here is what this implies. A very small incision will be made after local anesthesia. The sample will be transported immediately to our pathology department. In certain cases, we can obtain a preliminary result within the hour following the biopsy. However, the definitive diagnosis will only be available in the seven to ten days following the procedure, and it can sometimes take between 14 and 21 days if special examinations have been requested.

Biopsy under scan

A biopsy under scan is necessary when the tumour is located deep within the body, is non palpable, or is in close proximity to delicate structures such as blood vessels or major nerves. The biopsy is conducted by a radiologist specialized in musculoskeletal tumours while you are lying in the scan. A small incision is made under local anesthesia and, then a needle is positioned under image control, and finally a sample of your tumour is obtained and sent immediately to our pathology department. Unfortunately, in this type of procedure, it is not possible to have a preliminary result the day of the biopsy. The results will be communicated to you during an upcoming appointment at the clinic or over the telephone by your surgeon.

Biopsy in the operating room

A biopsy in the operating room is necessary in certain cases. One reason maybe that you have undergone a non-diagnostic biopsy, meaning that the sample taken was not representative of your mass and, therefore, did not allow for a definitive diagnosis. Sometimes, it is necessary to procure a larger sample of your mass in order to obtain enough material for analysis. If this is the case, a second procedure will take place in the operating room under general anesthesia. Normally, the procedure takes only five to fifteen minutes. A small incision is made, usually less than five centimeters, and a sample is sent to our pathology laboratory.

This kind of surgery generally occurs in the form of a one-day surgery, meaning that you leave the hospital the same day. It is important to arrange for someone to accompany you over the course of the day and return you to your home once the procedure has been completed. The results of the biopsy will be communicated to you during an upcoming appointment or by telephone.

What risks are involved in a biopsy ?

- There is a slight risk of infection, less than 1%
- There is a slight chance that the biopsy will be non-diagnostic and that we will have to redo the procedure in order to obtain a second sample

When will I receive the results ?

The results of your biopsy, as well as the results of your radiological investigations, will be discussed at our multidisciplinary meeting (tumor board), at which the best course of treatment will be established. This takes between ten and fourteen days following your biopsy, and sometimes longer. You will be either met at the clinic by your surgeon or contacted by telephone. We will ask you in which manner you prefer to receive the information.

How can I expect to feel after my biopsy?

You may feel slightly uncomfortable in the hours following your biopsy. This discomfort is generally appeased by Tylenol during the first 24 hours. In the case of an open biopsy, painkillers will be prescribed for your return home.

Care of the wound

Following a biopsy or a surgery, you must pay special attention to your incision in order to detect any signs of infection as soon as they appear.

Wound care after a biopsy

Following a biopsy, a dry bandage must be kept in place over the incision for a period of 48 to 72 hours. After this, it is possible to remove the bandage. If a biopsy under scan or at the clinic has been undergone, you will observe a small scab on the skin surface. It is important not to touch the scab; it will fall off by itself once the skin has healed. Once you have removed the bandage, it is permissible to shower (72 hours after the biopsy). You may allow water and soap to contact the incision. Avoid soaking the incision in a bath or pool for 2 weeks following your biopsy.

If you have undergone an open biopsy in the operating room, you may remove the bandage 72 hours after the procedure. Keep only the steristrips in place (small transparent adhesive strips). If your wound continues to leak slightly, apply a second dry bandage. Once the discharge has ceased, you may shower. You may allow water and soap to contact the incision. Avoid soaking the incision in a bath or pool for 2 weeks following your biopsy.

The steristrips will dry and the edges will begin to unglue gradually approximately seven to fourteen days after the biopsy. When this happens, you may trim the extremities of the steristrips, or remove them completely.

The risk of infection following a biopsy is very small (approximately 1%). Signs to look out for are :

- Fever of more than 38,5°C, 5 days after the operation, for more than 48 hours.
- Increased swelling of the wound
- Reddening of the skin surrounding the wound
- Increased pain of a different kind than that felt immediately after the surgery
- Nauseating or purulent discharge from the wound.

If you experience any of the symptoms mentioned above, your wound may be infected. Unless you already have a medical appointment scheduled in the next 24 to 48 hours, you must present yourself to the emergency ward at HMR hospital or to the nearest emergency ward.

Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont

Adresse postale

5415, boul. de l'Assomption
Montréal (Québec) H1T 2M4
514-252-3400

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Free translation of: *Vous avez subi une biopsie*

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