

Muscle Biopsy

Information for patients



What is a Muscle Biopsy?

We take a small sample of muscle which is then sent to a laboratory to be examined.

How is it done?

We use a local anaesthetic to numb the area (usually the outer side of the thigh but it may be another muscle).

We make a small cut on the skin and then identify the underlying muscle.

We remove a small piece of muscle and send it to the laboratory for testing.

We close the wound with sutures (stitches) and a dressing.

Will it be painful?

The procedure can cause some discomfort as we remove the small piece of muscle. Most people who have had the procedure say that it is a painful sensation which doesn't last long.

What are the possible complications of the operation?

While a Muscle Biopsy is considered to be a safe procedure, there are still risks involved, including a very small risk of bleeding or infection. Any bleeding is likely to be minor and any pain should settle within days. In the unlikely event of infection, patients may experience more prolonged discomfort. Bruising, scarring and delayed wound healings are also possible complications.

Sometimes the tissue is not adequate to make a diagnosis; in such cases a repeat procedure may be required.

Do I need to do anything to prepare?

The procedure takes place on a day patient basis so you will not need to stay overnight in hospital. The procedure will be done under local anaesthetic, so you will be awake during it.

If you are taking regular Aspirin or Clopidogrel, you should stop these 7 days before the biopsy. If you are on Warfarin, we need to know in advance to arrange INR blood tests and advise you on when to stop taking it. Your consultant should have informed us of this beforehand so you won't need to do anything but if you are unsure, you can use the phone number provided to contact us.

How long will I be in the hospital?

You can go home the same day but will not be able to drive and will certainly need to rest and take it easy for the next 3-4 days.

Do I need any special care after the biopsy?

No. We will cover the wound with a dry non-waterproof dressing. You will need to wear this for 7-10 days.

We recommend you only have showers. Avoid taking a bath. The sutures (stitches) will absorb into the skin and will not have to be removed.

It is common to get a small amount of bleeding that spots the dressing. If it soaks through the dressing, then you will need to call the Rheumatology team at Western General Hospital for advice. Please see contact details below.

When will I get the results?

We will send the results to your consultants or to your GP.

Leaving Hospital

You will be unable to drive yourself home or use public transport. Please arrange for someone to collect you.

We strongly recommended that you do not walk long distances for at least 3-4 days after your biopsy.

Please make arrangements for someone to support or help you for 3-4 days after the procedure.

If you have any other questions, please ask a member of staff.

Contact Details

Address

Rheumatic Diseases Unit
Western General Hospital
Crewe Road South
Edinburgh
EH4 2XU

Telephone

Rheumatology team, Western General Hospital: **01315371016**

