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If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask a member of the nursing or medical staff, or call the Dermatology/Skin Cancer Specialist Nurse:

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Patient Information

Punch Biopsy

***Dermatology
& Plastic Surgery***

www.yeovilhospital.nhs.uk

What is a punch biopsy?

A 'punch biopsy' is a very simple surgical procedure that involves removal of a small piece of skin. This skin sample is then sent to the laboratories for further testing.

What is it used for?

Punch biopsies are used to help confirm a suspected clinical diagnosis or to provide further information to aid diagnosis of a skin condition. They may also be used for completely removing small lesions, such as moles - called a 'punch excision'.

How is it done?

The biopsy may be performed by a doctor or a specially trained nurse.

This is performed under local anaesthetic. This involves a small injection that may sting or burn initially, but will then make the area numb.

Once you and the doctor are satisfied that the area is numb a special instrument is pressed against the skin, which is used to cut a small disc of skin. This is then removed and the hole closed, usually with stitches.

These stitches are usually removed in about 7 - 10 days by the practice nurse at your GP's surgery. Occasionally a dissolving stitch may be used, or it may not be possible to stitch the wound if the tissue is very fragile.

In this case a special dressing to reduce bleeding is applied and the wound will heal up from the inside.

What complications may occur?

The risks for this procedure are very small. There will be a small scar at the biopsy site. Very occasionally a scar may become raised - this is called a keloid scar.

As with all skin operations, there is also a small risk of bleeding or infection occurring after the operation, but this is less common than for larger procedures.

What happens after the operation?

In most cases, patients are asked to see their GP's practice nurse for removal of the stitches. The doctor will discuss with you whether they plan to see you again in clinic with the results, or whether this is not necessary. In this case, they will usually write to you and your GP with the results, once these are available.

General note

This information sheet gives an overview of punch biopsy but cannot cover all eventualities. If you have any questions after reading this information please speak to the doctor or nurse who is going to perform the operation.