



**What is a biopsy?** A biopsy removes a sample of cells from the surface of your skin. This sample can be examined in many ways to provide more information about your medical condition.

**There are three main types of biopsies:**

- Shave biopsy – a doctor uses a sharp blade to remove a small section of the two top layers of skin (epidermis and superficial dermis).
- Punch biopsy – a doctor uses a circular tool to use a small section of skin that can include the epidermis, dermis, and superficial fat.
- Excisional biopsy – a doctor uses a scalpel to remove an entire section of skin down to the fat, including some of the normal appearing surrounding skin.

A BIOPSY IS USUALLY USED AS A DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURE, AND MAY NOT RESULT IN THE COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THE LESION OR FUNCTION AS A TREATMENT

**What are the risks of a skin biopsy?** Skin biopsies are generally a safe procedure, but complications can occur including:

- Bleeding, bruising, infection
  - A scar will result from any procedure that removes a sample of skin – the type of scar that forms depends on the type of biopsy and the way an individual's skin heals
  - Biopsies on the neck or upper torso may result in more prominent, raised scars
  - The scar's permanent appearance may not be evident until 1-2 years after your biopsy
  - Most areas will begin to heal within 2 weeks – BIOPSIES ON THE LOWER LEGS AND FEET MAY TAKE LONGER TO HEAL
  - THE SAMPLE OBTAINED IN A BIOPSY MAY NOT ALWAYS ALLOW FOR A DIAGNOSIS TO BE MADE, AND MAY RESULT IN THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL BIOPSY/BIOPSIES TO OBTAIN A DIAGNOSIS
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