

Information for patients

A patient guide to having a Muscle Biopsy



The Oswestry Muscle Team

Why am I having a muscle biopsy?

- A muscle biopsy is used to help diagnose certain conditions.
- There are a wide range of conditions that can be diagnosed using a muscle biopsy.
- Often the biopsy is used with other tests to help make the diagnosis.

What is a muscle biopsy?

- A muscle biopsy is an operation where a small piece of muscle tissue is taken and examined under a microscope.
- The piece of muscle will also undergo other tests to help diagnose your condition.

How long will it take to get the result?

- It generally takes 2-3 months before results come back.
- This is because the biopsy undergoes lots of tests and then needs to be discussed by the team.
- Further testing may be required and the biopsy may be sent off to other laboratories for more studies.

Will I need a general anaesthetic?

- In most adults a muscle biopsy can be performed under a local anaesthetic.
- In some adults and children we perform a muscle biopsy under general anaesthetic. This means that you will be asleep throughout the operation.

Where is the biopsy taken from?

- We generally take the sample of muscle from the thigh.
- In certain circumstances we will take muscle from another part of body.
- We will discuss this with you before hand.

What is the procedure for a muscle biopsy under local anaesthetic?

- Before the operation takes place you will have a preoperative assessment to check your health.
- You will be admitted to hospital as a day case patient.
- You can eat and drink normally.
- After you have been admitted to hospital you will be taken up to the theatre department.
- The skin on the operation site will be cleaned and sterile towels are used to cover the area.
- Local anaesthetic will be injected into the area. This stings for a few seconds and then becomes numb. During the operation you may feel pushing and pulling sensations but you should not feel pain. If you do then let the doctor know and further local anaesthetic can be given.
- The scar is usually 4-5 cm long. A small piece of muscle about half a centimetre in diameter is taken. The wound is closed with stitches which are under the skin and do not need to be removed. A dressing is applied.

What is the procedure for a muscle biopsy under general anaesthetic?

- You will be advised on when you can eat and drink as you need to be starved for a period of time before a general anaesthetic
- After you have been admitted to hospital you will be taken up to the theatre department.
- The anaesthetist will put you to sleep and the operation will be performed.
- When you wake up you will be in the recovery department and will have a dressing on the area where the muscle biopsy was performed.
- The scar is usually 4-5 cm long. A small piece of muscle about half a centimetre in diameter is taken. The wound is closed with stitches which are under the skin and do not need to be removed. A dressing is applied.

What happens after the operation?

- Once you have recovered you can eat and drink normally and walk about.
- You will be sent home with some painkillers if you need them.
- You will need to keep the wound clean and dry until it is healed.
- The dressing may need to be changed 48 hours after the operation.

What are the possible complications of the operation?

- There will be a scar which is permanent. Most scars fade but some can stay visible or become unsightly.
- There is a small risk of wound healing problems or infection.
- There will be some slight discomfort for a few days afterwards.
- There is a chance that the biopsy will not help to make your diagnosis.
- Occasionally we will need to repeat the biopsy if it is inconclusive.
- With any operation there are risks of more serious complications but these are rare.

What do I do if there is a complication after a muscle biopsy?

- If you are worried about the wound then contact the hospital ward you attended- the switchboard number is 01691 404000. A member of the nursing staff can advise you.
- If you are worried about infection, contact the hospital as above or contact your General Practitioner.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

To enquire about your results, contact the Muscle team on:

Nicola Jones, Secretary to Dr T Willis, **01691 404047** or **01691 404630**

Debbie Davies, Secretary to Dr R Kulshrestha, **01691 404378**

Rachel Steel, Pathway co-ordinator, **01691 404486**

Patient Contact Organisations

- Muscular Dystrophy Campaign
www.muscular-dystrophy.org 0207 7803 4800
- Treat-NMD
www.treat-nmd.eu
- Action Duchenne
www.Actionduchenne.org – 020 8556 9955
- Duchenne Family Support Group
www.dfsg.org.uk
- Jennifer Trust for SMA
www.jtsma.org.uk – 0800 975 3100
- FSH-MD Support Group
www.fsh-group.org – 0800 652 6352
- Myotonic Dystrophy Support Group
www.mdsguk.org
- Charcott Marie Tooth Support Group
www.cmt.org.uk
- Disability Wales
www.disabilitywales.org
- Winsford Neuromuscular Centre
01606 860911

Notes:

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet. Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Date of publication: March 2024
Date of review: March 2027
Author: Nigel Kiely, Children's Unit
© RJAH Trust 2024

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt
Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,
Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7AG
Tel: 01691 404000
www.rjah.nhs.uk