Ian Corbett

Specialist Oral Surgeon

Biopsy

You have been referred for a biopsy which is a procedure to remove a small sample from inside your mouth. This may involve the lining of your mouth, the gums or tongue. Sometimes we may sample the underlying bone or areas within the bone. A biopsy may be used to remove an area of troublesome normal tissue, called an excisional biopsy, or to sample an area of unusual tissue to help diagnose disease and treat it, an incisional biopsy. All samples we take are sent for microscopic examination by experts in diagnosing disease.

Most biopsies can be carried out under local anaesthetic injections to numb the area, although you may wish to discuss sedation for the procedure, and we will be happy to advise you. The procedure is usually short, lasting 10-15 minutes, and often involves stitches. If we use stitches these will dissolve and do not need to be removed. I you have had local anaesthetic only you may drive or return to work if you wish.

As your mouth may be uncomfortable when the numbness wears off it is often best to have a light meal before coming for your surgery. You should take your regular medicines as normal unless we have told you not to. As with any mouth surgery it is best to avoid eating until the numbness wears off and then avoid hot food and drinks and eat soft food initially. Ideally you can sip on a cold drink straight away.

Blood stained saliva is normal for the first 24 hours, and you should take care to not to rinse vigorously and when cleaning your teeth not to disturb the area. If the area bleeds noticeably then this can be stopped by gentle pressure with gauze or a cotton handkerchief.

Infection is not common after a biopsy and we will advise you if you need antibiotics. A simple salt-water mouthwash will help to keep the area clean. The lining of the mouth generally heals very quickly, and we will give you advice on which painkillers to take, although simple paracetamol for 24 hours is usually sufficient.

We will provide you with aftercare instructions and contact information in case you have any problems. We will discuss whether we need to see you again and arrange a follow-up appointment for you. We may send your results to your dentist and contact you by telephone if this is more convenient. Please be assured that most lumps and bumps in the mouth are simple and easily treated. We will share any concerns we have with you before your procedure and will do our best to treat you quickly, confirm your diagnosis and arrange timely treatment as necessary.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your procedure.