

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET RESULTS OF A BIOPSY

The length of time for biopsy results varies. A technique called frozen section can give results in a very short amount of time. This technique also has a higher likelihood of giving an incorrect or incomplete diagnosis. Frozen section is used almost exclusively in the operating room, where decisions have to be made immediately.

In most cases biopsy results are obtained within two three days. If the biopsy material is not clear cut, delays may occur. The pathologist may need to consult with additional partners or different preparations or staining may be needed. In some cases, the slides need to be sent away to a pathologist with special knowledge or expertise of a certain problem.

## WHAT CAN A BIOPSY TELL?

Some of the more common interpretations of a biopsy included:

- Normal tissue, no abnormalities
- Not normal, but no cancerous or malignant (often inflammation)
- Not normal, difficult to interpret
- Not normal, not cancerous but a pre-cancerous condition
- Cancer

## WHAT EXACTLY IS A BIOPSY?

Biopsy is defined as the process of removing a sample of body tissue to examine it for the presence of disease. There are many reasons for requiring a biopsy, but, the most common is to help determine if cancer is present in the tissue. The most common types of biopsies are:

- Excisional Biopsy, which means that all of the suspicious area is removed
- Incisional Biopsy, which means that part of the suspicious area, is removed
- Needle Biopsy, which means that a hollow needle is placed in the suspicious area and the core of tissue is removed
- Aspiration Biopsy, which means that a very thin hollow needle is placed into the suspicious area and using suction individual cells are drawn out.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

The risks vary depending on the technique and body part. All biopsies have some common risks that are associated with almost any surgical procedure such as, bleeding, pain, and infection. These risks should be understood by any patient

## WHO INTERPRETS THE BIOPSY

A biopsy is interpreted by a pathologist. The tissue that is removed has been stained, placed on a slide and will be examined under microscope by pathologist(s). The pathologist(s) is then able to give an accurate diagnosis.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CONCERNS ABOUT BIOPSY RESULTS?

The biopsy shows no cancer. This finding is obviously the best for the patient, but, the patient must be aware that cancer could still form. A biopsy can reveal cancer, but a biopsy does not rule out the existence of cancer. If the specimen does not contain the cancer cells within it, cancer may exist somewhere else.

To restate this important point, patient could still have cancer even if the biopsy was negative. The doctor will ask to follow up with the patient to make sure cancer does not arise. The doctor will ask to follow up with the patient to make sure cancer does not arise. If the patient's situation remains suspicious, the doctor will do a follow up biopsy.

The biopsy is difficult to interpret. The biopsy material may have been damaged or distorted during the procedure, transportation, or preparation. Sometimes there is not enough tissue presented or the tissue do not have the characteristics that allow for an accurate diagnosis. Remember the job of a pathologist is to interpret the tissue and make decision. If things remain uncertain the doctor will ask to perform an additional biopsy.

The biopsy shows a pre-cancerous condition. This is quite common in the prostate, bladder, breast and cervix. This means that the tissue has some of the characteristics of a cancer or malignancy but not enough to state that cancer exists at the time of the biopsy. These findings warrant close attention and in many cases, an additional biopsy later on. In some areas of the body, the pre-cancerous situation is so strongly linked with the subsequent development of cancer that treatment has begun.

The biopsy shows cancer. The pathologist has found some cancerous tissue in the body. Most pathologists will ask another associate to take a look at the tissues to make sure he/she made an accurate diagnosis. In this case they will come to a rational decision.

In summary, a biopsy is an important procedure for a gentleman to have. As you know, many situations can arise and each of them may be discussed with your physician.