



A guide to...

Neck Node Biopsy

Patient information

How to contact us

Oral and Maxillofacial Department
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Tel: 01923 217 205

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



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What is a neck node biopsy?

A neck node biopsy (lymph node) is a procedure where a portion of your lymph node or the entire node is removed from your neck. It is then sent to a pathologist to be looked at closely under a microscope.

Lymph nodes are small oval-shaped organs located in different regions of your body. A lymph node may swell in response to an infection; the most common areas are armpits, groin and the neck. Lymph nodes are part of your immune system and they help your body to recognise and fight off infections. We carry out a biopsy if there is a persistent swelling or an ultrasound-guided fine needle aspiration (FNA) result has been recommended by the haematology department.

How is it done?

In most cases neck node biopsies are carried out under local anaesthetic (an injection to make the area numb). The injection takes up to five minutes to work and means that the biopsy should be pain free; some pressure may be felt.

The operation itself normally takes up to 45 minutes. A small incision (cut) is made over the lymph gland once the node has been located the whole node or small portion (wedge) is removed.

During the procedure to stop any bleeding, we use a diathermy machine which cauterizes the blood vessels. The wound is then stitched with either dissolvable or removable sutures. These will usually be taken out at your GP practice after 5-7 days or as instructed on the day.

After the biopsy, the area will feel tender, firm, swollen and bruised. You may also experience stiffness in your neck and shoulder. We recommend you take simple painkillers (eg paracetamol or ibuprofen). The tenderness should go away within a week and any bruising will fade within two weeks. It takes about 10 to 14 days for the incision to heal. In that time avoid any heavy lifting, swimming or strenuous exercise.

Recognised Complications

As with all operations there is a small risk of bleeding and infection. If these occur when you go home please contact the department (numbers below). A very **uncommon** but serious complication during a neck node biopsy is nerve damage. The most important nerve in the area is the accessory nerve which can cause some stiffness/drooping of the shoulder. This will be discussed with you when signing a consent form.

When can I return to work?

This largely depends on your job and how you feel after the procedure. In most cases people are able to return to work the next day.

Are there any things I should do when I get home?

As mentioned above, start taking simple painkillers when you get home. Do rest for around 12-24 hours after the procedure; you may need to sleep with an extra pillow for the next couple of nights.

Will I need another appointment?

Results can take up to two weeks to be formally reported. If haematology referred you to us they will give you the results. If you are under our care, we'll make you another appointment after the procedure to give you the results.

If you have a queries or problems here are some useful numbers:

Oral Surgery Department

Tel: 01923 244366 Ext: 3855

Watford General Hospital

Tel: 01923 217205

Mon-Thurs 9.00am to 5.00PM

Fridays 9.00AM TO 4.30PM

Northwick Park Hospital

Tel: 020 8864 3232

After 5pm and at the weekend ask for Oral Surgery, Senior House Officer (SHO) on call.

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