

NIH Clinical Center Patient Education Materials

Muscle biopsy

A muscle biopsy is a procedure that removes a small piece of muscle from your leg through a small needle. This procedure will help your research team learn about your muscle cells and how they work.

Before the procedure, your team will discuss the procedure with you and answer all of your questions. You will need to sign a consent form to give permission to do the biopsy.

Your Name:

Date/time of procedure:

Location of procedure:

Within seven days of the biopsy

- Get your blood work done. Your team will order some routine tests, including a complete blood count (CBC) and a prothrombin time (PT)/partial thromboplastin Time (PTT) test. Depending on which study that you are enrolled in, your team may require additional blood work.

Three to seven days before the biopsy

- Tell a member of your research team if you take a blood thinner, such as Coumadin (warfarin). You cannot have a biopsy if you are taking this medication. Your research team and your primary health care provider will tell you whether it is safe to stop your blood thinner temporarily. Do not stop taking the medication unless your doctor tells you to.
- Do not take aspirin or medications containing aspirin (such as cough medicine or cold medicine).
- Do not take NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). These include:
 - Motrin and Advil (Ibuprofen)
 - Indomethacin (Indocin)
 - Alieve and Naprosyn (Naproxen)
- You may take Tylenol (acetaminophen) for pain, if needed.

The day of the biopsy

- Take a shower or a bath the morning of your biopsy.
- Ask your research team if it is okay to eat breakfast in the morning. If you are

scheduled to have other tests in addition to the biopsy, you may be asked not to eat or drink.

What to Expect During the Biopsy

- When you arrive on the unit, your research team will review why we are doing the biopsy and what to expect.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form that explains the procedure. Signing the consent form gives your health care team permission to do the biopsy.
- Your health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) will inject a local anesthetic just under the skin of your leg to numb the area. You will feel a slight burning during this injection.
- Your provider may or may not make a small cut in your leg. This is called an incision. The incision will be about 1 inch long.
- Your provider will remove small pieces of tissue through the incision. You may feel some pressure, tugging, and discomfort.
- After your provider collects the tissue, he or she will apply pressure to the site for 5 to 10 minutes to stop any bleeding.
- Your provider will place sterile tape, gauze, and a compression/ACE bandage over the incision.
- Your provider may ask you to lie down for 1 hour with a cold ice pack over the procedure site.

After the Biopsy

- Take it easy, and keep your leg elevated whenever possible. You can try prop your leg up on pillows for support.
- Take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain if needed, but no aspirin or NSAIDs.
- Try not to step heavily or walk long distances (more than a quarter of a mile) for the first 48 hours.
- Remove the compression/ACE bandage two to three hours after the procedure.
- Remove the clear dressing and sterile tape over the incision 7 – 10 days after the procedure. By then, the incision should be closed. Let your provider know if it has not healed.
- Watch out for possible signs and symptoms of infection:
 - Excessive redness, tenderness, swelling, or increased heat around the biopsy site
 - Pain that does not go away or gets worse
 - A lot of fluid coming out from the incision site (A small amount of pink-tinged fluid may be normal.)
 - Fever

If you see any of these signs and symptoms, call the NIH CC Page Operator at 301-496-1211, and have them page your NIH CC health care provider who performed the procedure.

Special instructions

- If you were taking aspirin and/or NSAIDS medications, such as Motrin or Advil (ibuprofen), Indomethacin (Indocin), or Alieve and Naprosyn (naproxen), before the procedure, then you may restart these medications 72 hours after the biopsy.
- If you stopped taking blood-thinning medications such as Coumadin (warfarin) for the biopsy, talk to your provider about when you can start taking them again. Usually, you can start taking your blood-thinner medications again 5 days after the procedure.

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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National Institutes of Health Clinical Center

Bethesda, MD 20892

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