

Skin Biopsy

Dermatology Service



VETERINARY
MEDICAL CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

What is a skin biopsy? A skin biopsy is a minor surgical procedure to remove samples of abnormal skin with the purpose of establishing a diagnosis. A biopsy is a valuable tool and it is typically performed when other initial diagnostic procedures are not sufficient. Biopsy results can be non-diagnostic or inconclusive; however, results often help to exclude certain diseases and develop a treatment plan for your pet.

How are skin biopsies taken? Skin biopsies are taken using a biopsy punch instrument to remove a small skin sample (4-8 mm diameter), from different affected skin areas. One or two stitches are usually necessary to close the biopsy site. With larger or deep skin lesions a larger incision with a scalpel blade may be needed. The procedure is usually relatively quick. Extra samples might be collected to investigate an infectious cause.

Is sedation or anesthesia needed? Most skin biopsies can be performed only with local anesthesia. Patients that are very fearful, nervous, anxious, aggressive or cannot tolerate local anesthesia injections may need sedation or general anesthesia. Some sites such as mouth, nose, ears and footpads or painful/sensitive skin disease require sedation or general anesthesia. **If your pet received sedation or general anesthesia today, please review the handout for monitoring and caring for your pet at home during post-anesthesia recovery.**

How long will it take for the results? Biopsy samples are sent to an external laboratory where they are processed and examined by a dermatopathologist. Results are usually available within 5-10 days.

How should I care for my pet at home after the skin biopsy? There is normally very little aftercare. Drugs such as antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and pain killers are usually not necessary. We use absorbable stitches; therefore, stitches removal is not needed in most cases. If the stitches come out after 24 hours of the procedure, we usually do not close the biopsy sites again.

1. Do not let your pet lick or scratch the biopsy sites. Your pet may need to wear a collar or protective shirt to prevent self-trauma. Do not cover the sites with any type of bandage.
2. Prevent your pet from getting dirty, rubbing or rolling on the ground for the next 72 hours.
3. Do not bathe or groom your pet for 10-14 days (or as directed by your pet's veterinarian).
4. Do not apply any topicals to the biopsy sites for 10-14 days.
5. Restrict strenuous exercises for 48 hours as increased motion may open incision and delay healing.

What are potential biopsy complications? Mild initial bleeding can be normal. Complications such as infection are rare. Monitor biopsy sites for excessive/continuous bleeding and for infection signs (swelling, oozing pus, malodor). If lethargy, inappetence or severe pain occurs, please contact us. Scars may occur at biopsy sites.

*If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us directly at the **Dermatology Service** at **612-624-4831** or **vetderm@umn.edu**. For after hours, urgent or emergency needs please call **612-626-8387**.*

Thank you for your trust in us with the care of your precious companion.