

Having a day case kidney biopsy

Information and advice for patients, relatives & carers

This leaflet gives you information about kidney biopsy; it will explain the procedure and the possible risks. Please read it and talk to the nurse or doctor if you have any further questions.

What is a kidney biopsy?

A kidney or renal biopsy means removing a very small sample of your kidney with a special needle. The sample is examined under a microscope to find the cause of the kidney disease.

Why do you need a kidney biopsy?

A biopsy can help find the reason your kidneys are not working properly and will help to make a correct diagnosis, so that treatment can be planned accordingly. A biopsy is only done when the cause of your kidney problem is not known despite other tests. Your consultant will tell you what they are looking for and answer any questions you have about the procedure.

Who will be doing the biopsy?

The biopsy will be performed by a radiology doctor in the x-ray department. The doctor performing the procedure will be different to the one who referred you for it, but they will be happy to answer any further questions that you may have.

Where is the biopsy done?

On the day of your biopsy you will be admitted to the Treatment and Investigation Unit on Feltwell Ward where you will have observations taken prior to the procedure. The biopsy is done in the radiology department.

What happens before the biopsy?

Before the biopsy can take place you will need:

- Blood tests.
- Blood pressure to be well controlled.
- Urine test.
- To stop taking blood thinning or anticoagulation medicine. Please stop aspirin/clopidogrel/dipyridamole 7 days before and warfarin 5 days before. IF IT HAS BEEN SAID SAFE TO DO SO BY YOUR DOCTOR. All other medications can be taken on the morning of the biopsy.
- You should not have anything to eat for 2 hours before the procedure, but you can continue to drink as normal.
- To sign a consent form.

Your biopsy could be postponed if any of the results show that it would not be safe for you to have the biopsy.

How is the biopsy done?

You will have your biopsy in the radiology department. You will be asked to lie on your front. The biopsy is done by:

1. The radiologist will use an ultrasound scanner to find the exact position of the kidney. Because the biopsy can be taken from either kidney, the radiologist will choose the kidney which makes the procedure most straightforward.
2. The skin on your back is cleaned with an antiseptic solution and covered with a sterile towel.
3. Local anaesthetic is then injected first in to the skin, and then the area around the kidney to numb the area.
4. Once the area around the kidney is numb from the local anaesthetic a small incision is made in the skin and acts as a passage for the biopsy needle to pass through.

5. You will be asked to hold your breath whilst the sample is taken; this is to ensure that your kidney does not move.
6. You may feel a little pressure and hear a clicking sound when the biopsy is taken.
7. 2 to 3 samples will usually be taken to ensure that there is enough to be examined.
8. The whole procedure should take around 30 minutes.

Will the procedure hurt?

Lying on their front can be uncomfortable for some people, but this does not usually cause a problem as the biopsy only takes a short time. When the local anaesthetic is injected it usually stings a little, but this only lasts a short time as the area will become numb. You may be aware of the needle being inserted into the kidney but this does not usually cause pain. Most patients say that their kidney biopsy was uncomfortable but did not hurt.

What are the risks of having a kidney biopsy?

As with all medical treatments and investigations, there are some risks and complications that can arise from kidney biopsy. Your consultant has recommended the kidney biopsy because the benefits of the information gained will outweigh any risks to you.

The risk of serious complication is small. The most serious complication is bleeding and it is important to tell your doctor if you have problems with easy bleeding or bruising. All kidney biopsies bleed slightly, but very few bleed heavily enough to cause a problem.

- In about 1 in 10 biopsies you can see blood in the urine but it settles on its own.
- Fewer than 1 in 50 biopsies bleed more and a blood transfusion is required.
- Fewer than 1 in 500 biopsies need an x-ray or surgical procedure to stop the bleeding.

What happens after the biopsy?

After the biopsy you will be taken back to the Treatment and Investigation Unit on Feltwell Ward. Here you will:

- Have bed rest for 6 hours. You will be asked to lie flat in bed to reduce the risk of bleeding. The head of the bed may be raised slightly so that you can eat and drink.
- Have your pulse and blood pressure monitored very closely until the bed rest is over.
- Have your urine inspected for signs of blood.
- If you feel any discomfort in the back, pain relief will be given if needed.
- If you need to pass urine you will have to use a bed pan or urinal.
- Following the 6 hours bed rest, the nurse will assess whether you are ready to get out of bed and go home. As long as there is no bleeding you can leave the hospital the same day. You must be driven rather than drive yourself.
- You must have a responsible adult with you at home for 24 hours after your biopsy.

What can I expect when I return home?

Rest if possible. You can usually go back to work after two days rest at home but you should:

- Avoid any strenuous activity, exercise or heavy lifting for two weeks after the biopsy (for example picking up heavy shopping or manual work).
- Not drive until the day after the biopsy and only if you have no pain.
- Some patients experience a little discomfort from the biopsy site for 24 to 48 hours after the procedure. If this happens you can take paracetamol.
- It is possible to bathe or shower as you normally would the day after the procedure.
- If you require a certificate for your employer then this should be obtained from your own GP.

If you return home and experience any of the following symptoms:

- Bright red (fresh) blood in your urine
- Severe pain around the kidney
- Fell dizzy or faint
- Unable to pass urine

Then you should contact your GP surgery (or out of hours contact The Medical Assessment Unit on 01553 613870, and ask to bleep medical registrar on 3872). You will need to inform them of your symptoms and explain that you have recently had a kidney biopsy.

When do I get the results?

For urgent biopsies we usually get the first results within 48 hours and this can give us enough information to diagnose many kidney problems. However, we have to examine the kidney tissue with special stains and an electron microscope before we have the final results. This usually takes two weeks and results should be available at your next outpatient appointment.

Further Information

You can get more information from

- National Kidney Research Fund on their website:
www.kidneyresearchuk.org/
- Or by calling their helpline on 0845 3001499