

## What is a nerve biopsy?

A Nerve biopsy is a minor surgical procedure done under local anesthesia. A small piece of nerve is removed through a small cut (incision) in your skin. The small nerve sample is taken from the back of your leg just below the knee crease or just above your ankle. The nerve sample is then examined for a diagnosis. A small piece of nearby muscle may also be removed and examined.

## Why do I need a nerve biopsy?

- To determine what type of nerve damage you have.
- To identify other causes of nerve pain. These can include damage, swelling, or disease to the surrounding nervous system

## How do I prepare for this test?

Tell your doctor if you are taking a medication that causes prolonged bleeding. These medications include Entrophen (aspirin), Plavix, Aggrenox, and Coumadin. **These should be stopped before the biopsy.** You **must** speak with the doctor who prescribed this medication before the test to know if it is safe to stop these pills and they will instruct you on how to adjust these medications..

- You can eat breakfast and take medications (excluding the ones mentioned above).

- Please bring a list of your medications.
- You may receive a mild sedative before your biopsy. This means you will not be able to drive home. Please make arrangements to have someone come with you or pick you up after your biopsy. **If this is not arranged, your procedure may be cancelled.**

## What happens before the biopsy?

- A nurse will ask you some basic questions about your health. They will also describe how the biopsy is done.
- A mild sedative is often given before the biopsy to help you relax.

You will be taken to the operating room (OR) when the OR staff is ready. This is where your biopsy will be done.

## What happens during the biopsy?

- A local anesthetic is used to numb the biopsy site.
- A small cut (incision) is then made in the skin. The nerve sample, or biopsy, is removed through this cut. If you are also having a muscle biopsy, a muscle sample will also be taken.
- When the nerve is cut you will feel an electric shock. The discomfort is brief.
- To help the wound heal, the edges of the cut are held together by (stitches) or by using a special tape (steri-strips). The site is then covered with a bandage.

## How long will the procedure take?

Normally, it takes 45 minutes.

## What will happen after the biopsy

- You will rest in the Neuro Day Centre for about one hour after your biopsy. You will then be discharged to go home.
- You should limit your walking for the first 48 hours.
- Your wound will heal within a week. Do not change your bandage during this time. Keep your bandage dry.
- Wrap your bandage in plastic before showering.
- After one week your bandage will be removed. Your wound will be examined and if you have stitches they will be removed. This will be done at your local CLSC.

## What are the possible problems?

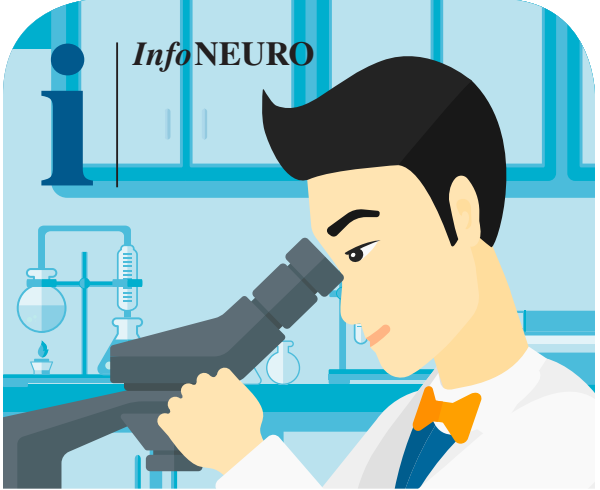
- You will have permanent numbness on the outside of your ankle and sometimes on the outside of your foot. This is because the nerve has been cut. This will not affect your balance or your ability to walk.
- Shock-like pain in your lower leg during the healing period. This may be related to certain movements. This pain is common after a nerve biopsy. Tylenol may be taken as instructed. Contact your doctor for medication if the pain is very uncomfortable. As the nerve heals the pain should go away.
- Bruising. This will go away after a few days.
- An allergic reaction to the bandage. If you have an allergic reaction, you will feel itchy. You may also have redness around the bandage. A new bandage will need to be applied if this happens. This may be done at the Neuro Day Centre or at the CLSC.
- Infection. If you develop a fever, have oozing from the bandage or have an increase in pain after a few days you may have an infection. Please notify your doctor or contact the Neuro Day Centre for instructions. **We are open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. (514-398-1986).**

## When and how will I receive the results of the biopsy?

Please make a follow-up appointment with the doctor who requested the biopsy (your neurologist or other treating physician) to discuss the results of your biopsy.

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# Nerve Biopsy

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