How to Prepare: Biopsy

Most biopsies need little preparation — but these points make the day smoother and the sample better:

- ☐ Tell the team about medicines that affect bleeding — blood thinners and regular anti-inflammatory painkillers — and ask whether to pause any of them. Do not stop prescribed medicines on your own.
- ☐ Mention allergies, especially to local anaesthetics, latex or antiseptics, and any previous problems with bleeding or fainting at procedures.
- ☐ Most small biopsies need no fasting. If sedation or a general anaesthetic is planned, you will be given fasting instructions — follow them exactly.
- ☐ Wear loose, comfortable clothing that gives easy access to the area being sampled, and leave jewellery at home for imaging-guided procedures.
- ☐ Arrange a lift home if you are having sedation. After a simple skin or needle biopsy under local anaesthetic, most people travel home as normal.
- ☐ Write down any questions you want answered — including how and when results will reach you — so nothing is forgotten on the day.

What to expect

Before	The clinician explains why the sample is needed, exactly where it will be taken from, and the small risks — bleeding, bruising, infection, and the chance the sample is not enough and needs repeating. You sign a consent form, and the area is positioned and cleaned.
During	For most biopsies the skin is numbed with a small injection of local anaesthetic — a brief sting, then the area goes numb. You may feel pushing, pressure or a clicking sound from a spring-loaded needle, but sharp pain should not continue; say so if it does, so more anaesthetic can be given.
After	Keep the dressing dry for the time you are told — often a day or two — and expect a bruise and some soreness as the anaesthetic wears off. Simple painkillers you normally use are usually fine; the team will say if any should be avoided.

Medically reviewed by Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, MD, PhD — physician-scientist. Last reviewed October 2026.

This handout is general information to help you prepare; it does not replace the instructions from your own care team. If your clinic gave you different instructions, follow theirs.