

Sural Nerve, Peroneal Nerve and Muscle Biopsies

Instructions for patients going home

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- How to care for your incision
- What activities are safe
- How to manage your pain
- What to do in case of emergency
- When to see the surgeon for a follow-up visit



You have had an anesthetic or narcotic medicine.

- Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
- Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.



What is a nerve biopsy?

A nerve biopsy is a procedure where a small piece of nerve is removed from your body for testing. Biopsies help your doctor identify nerve conditions and confirm certain medical problems or disorders.

The different kinds of nerve biopsies are:

- **Sural nerve biopsy:** For this procedure a small piece of the sural nerve in the ankle is removed for testing. This is the most common nerve biopsy.
- **Peroneal nerve biopsy:** A small piece of the peroneal nerve from the foot is removed for testing.
- **Muscle biopsy:** A small piece of muscle commonly from the upper arm or thigh is removed for testing. The biopsy is usually done to find diseases that affect how the muscle works.

What can I eat and drink after the biopsy?

You can go back to eating and drinking what you normally would right away.

How much activity is safe?

Use your arm or leg as you normally would, except for these restrictions:

- Do NOT do strenuous sports such as running or aerobics for 2 or 3 days.
- Do NOT lift anything heavier than 5 kg or 10 lbs if your hand was biopsied.
- Do NOT stand or walk for long periods of time within the first 24 hours.
- When you lie down or sit up, keep your biopsied arm or leg up on 1 or 2 pillows for the first 24 hours. This helps reduce swelling.

How do I take care of my wound?

- Keep the bandage clean and dry at all times.
- Leave the bandage on until you return for your follow-up appointment.
- If your surgeon has told you to remove the bandage, do so as instructed.
- If you have Steri-strips under the bandage (small white tapes), leave them in place. When they start to peel off, remove them and throw them away.
- Keep your arm or foot covered until the wound heals or the stitches have been removed (usually 7 to 10 days after the biopsy).
- If you have stitches, they will be removed at your next follow-up appointment.

When can I shower?

- You can shower 24 hours after your biopsy. Leave the bandage in place and make sure it does not get wet. When you shower, wrap your arm or leg in plastic.

How do I manage pain?

- Some pain or discomfort is normal after a biopsy. You should feel less and less pain every day.
- If we give you a prescription for pain medication, fill the prescription at a pharmacy. Follow the directions for taking the medication.
- If we do not give you a prescription and you have pain, take acetaminophen like Tylenol Extra Strength (1 or 2 pills) when needed.

What if I am constipated?

Some pain medicines can make you constipated. To prevent constipation:

- ✓ Drink 3 to 5 glasses of water every day. Each glass should be about 8 ounces.
- ✓ Eat foods that are high in fibre such as whole grains, bran, fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ If you have not had a bowel movement for 72 hours, take a laxative such as Milk of Magnesia. You can buy it from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions on the bottle.



Problems to watch for

Call your surgeon or your family doctor or come to the Toronto Western Hospital Emergency Department if any of the problems below happen to you. If you are from out of town, go to the nearest hospital emergency department:

- **A lot of swelling** in your hand or foot.
- **Bleeding from the area that was biopsied:** Put pressure on the area that is bleeding for 15 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop and blood soaks the dressing, call your surgeon or 416 340 3155.
- **Blue skin or cold fingers or toes:** Your fingers or toes change colour, feeling or you have trouble moving them.
- **Severe pain:** You have a very bad pain that does not go away, even after taking the pain medication.
- **Fever:** Your temperature is higher than 38 °C or 101 °F.

