



InfoNEURO
Neuro-Patient Resource Centre

Nerve Biopsy

Outpatient Check-in Neurological Day Centre

Second floor, Room 238

Montreal Neurological Institute
and Hospital

3801 University Street

Montreal, Quebec

514 398-1986

ABOUT THE TEST

What is a nerve biopsy?

Nerve biopsy is a minor surgical procedure done with a local anesthetic to numb the area. A piece of nerve is removed through a small cut (incision) in your skin. This is often done in the back of your leg just below the knee crease. The nerve sample is then examined for a diagnosis. A small piece of nearby muscle may also be removed and examined.

Why do you need a nerve biopsy?

- To determine what is wrong.
- 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.

YOUR PREPARATION

How do you 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 your doctor before the test to know if it is safe to stop these pills and he/she 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 will 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 will be cancelled.

What happens before your biopsy?

- A nurse will ask you some basic questions about your health. She 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.



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DURING YOUR BIOPSY

What happens during your biopsy?

- A local anesthetic is used to numb the biopsy site.
- A small cut (incision) is then made in the skin. The sample, or biopsy, is removed through this cut. If you are 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 a thread (stitches). Or by using a special tape (steri-strips). The site is then covered with a bandage.

How long will your procedure take?

Normally, it takes 45 minutes.

AFTER YOUR 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. And 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 stitches will be removed. This will be done at your local CLSC.

Possible side effects

- **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 phase.** 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 will 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 is the case. 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. You must 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 you receive the results of your biopsy?

A follow-up appointment is made with the doctor who did the test. Results may take up to six weeks.