



# PATIENT INFORMATION

## Neck Mass Biopsy:

### What Should the Adult Patient Expect?

#### QUESTION

#### ANSWER

What is a biopsy?

A biopsy involves taking a sample of tissue from the neck mass. This sample of tissue is looked at under the microscope by a pathologist (a specialized doctor), to make a diagnosis. A biopsy is a common test to check for cancer. There are different types of biopsies that can be done. The type of biopsy performed is based on your history and the location of your mass.

What are the different type of biopsies?

**Fine Needle Aspiration Biopsy (FNA)**

An FNA is the best initial test to diagnose a neck mass. A small needle is put into the mass and tissue is pulled out. An FNA is often done in your doctor's office. It is well-tolerated by most patients.

Risks include:

- Discomfort
- Bruising
- Infection
- Not getting enough tissue for a diagnosis

**Core Biopsy**

A core biopsy is another way to diagnose a neck mass. A core biopsy may be done instead of or after an FNA. A core biopsy uses a slightly larger needle and gets a larger piece of tissue. It is well tolerated and has a low risk of complications.

Risks include:

- Bleeding
- Bruising
- Discomfort
- Infection
- Not getting enough tissue for a diagnosis

**Open Biopsy**

An open biopsy is another way to diagnose a neck mass. It is a more invasive procedure. Open biopsy is done by a surgeon in the operating room and you will need anesthesia. An open biopsy may remove only portion of the mass or the whole mass. Because open biopsies are more invasive, there is a higher risk for complications.

Risks include:

- Complications of anesthesia
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Discomfort
- Scarring
- Nerve injury (numbness, paralysis)

**SOURCE:** Pynnonen, MA, Gillespie, MB, Rosenfeld RM, et al. Clinical Practice Guideline: Evaluation of the Neck Mass in Adult. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2017; 157(2 Suppl):S1-S30.



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### QUESTION

What should I do to prepare for a biopsy?

When should I get my results?

### ANSWER

If you need an open biopsy your provider will tell you how to prepare. For any biopsy, let your provider know if you take blood thinners or have bleeding problems.

Your medical provider should call you or set up a follow-up appointment within 1 week of your biopsy. If you do not get your results after 1 week, you should call your medical provider.

**SOURCE:** Pynnonen, MA, Gillespie, MB, Rosenfeld RM, et al. Clinical Practice Guideline: Evaluation of the Neck Mass in Adult. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2017; 157(2 Suppl):S1-S30.



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
OTOLARYNGOLOGY-  
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY

FOUNDATION

[www.entnet.org](http://www.entnet.org)

#### ABOUT THE AAO-HNS/F

The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery ([www.entnet.org](http://www.entnet.org)), one of the oldest medical associations in the nation, represents about 12,000 physicians and allied health professionals who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the ears, nose, throat and related structures of the head and neck. The Academy serves its members by facilitating the advancement of the science and art of medicine related to otolaryngology and by representing the specialty in governmental and socioeconomic issues. The AAO-HNS Foundation works to advance the art, science, and ethical practice of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery through education, research, and lifelong learning. The organization's vision: "Empowering otolaryngology-head and neck surgeons to deliver the best patient care."