



Endoscopy biopsies: a short guide

Patient information | Source check: 2026-10-15

Why were samples taken?

A biopsy is a small piece of the digestive tract's inner lining, collected through the endoscope and examined under a microscope. Samples can identify microscopic colitis when the bowel looks normal, help confirm coeliac disease, assess inflammation or an area suspicious for cancer, and detect infections such as *H. pylori*. When an area looks clearly worrying, that concern is often apparent during the endoscopy and the biopsy confirms the diagnosis and guides treatment. Taking samples does not mean cancer was found.

A sample or a removal?

A biopsy samples an area. It may not remove it all. Polyp removal is a separate treatment, and the removed polyp also goes to the laboratory. Check your report to see what was sampled or removed.

Your results

Laboratory times vary, but routine biopsy reports often take a few weeks. Histology for a suspected serious problem may be prioritised and reported sooner. Extra stains or a specialist review can take longer, and a delay does not by itself mean a serious result. Contact our team if results from a test we arranged have not arrived when expected. I combine the biopsy results with the endoscopy findings, your symptoms and medical history to recommend a management plan. Treatment and follow-up will be documented once tissue results are available.

Aftercare

Routine lining biopsies are generally very safe and usually not felt. Tiny biopsy wounds heal quickly. Significant bleeding is very uncommon. Follow your discharge and medicine instructions. For blood thinners, the plan should say whether each is withheld and, if so, when to take the last dose and when to restart it. If unsure, call our endoscopy team. Seek urgent help for heavy bleeding, black stools, severe or worsening pain, fever, persistent vomiting or faintness. Call 111 if you collapse.

Seek urgent medical assessment for heavy or ongoing bleeding, black tarry stools, severe or worsening chest or abdominal pain, fever, persistent vomiting or feeling faint or very unwell. Call 111 if you collapse or are too unwell to travel safely.

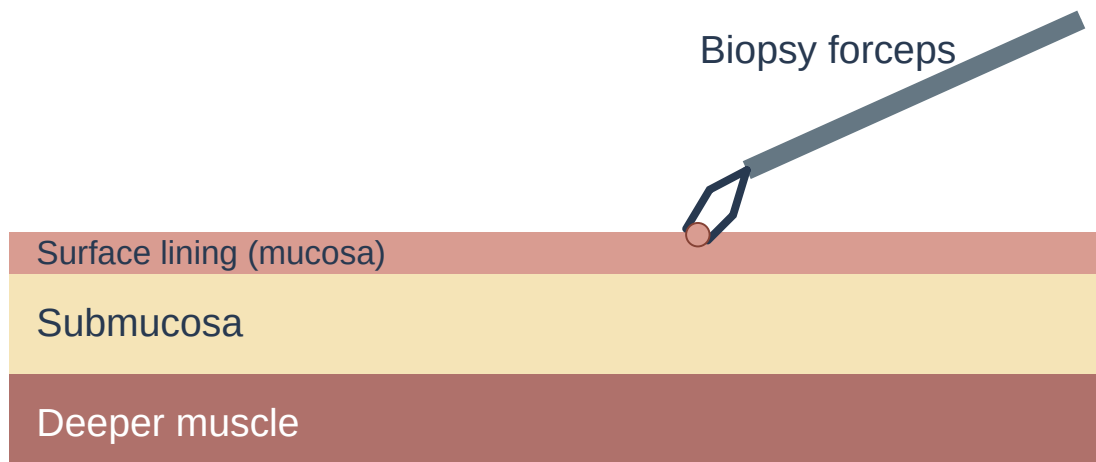




Follow a tissue sample

Taking the sample

Inside the digestive tract



Small biopsy forceps take a tiny sample from the surface lining. The deeper muscle is not cut through for a routine biopsy.

Read this illustration alongside the advice in this guide.

