**Punch Biopsy Patient Information Sheet**

**When is a punch biopsy necessary?**

**Your doctor may advise that a sample of skin is taken from an area of abnormal skin growth to obtain a diagnosis, especially when skin cancer is suspected  The sample of skin can be taken using a “Punch Biopsy’ which removes a small circle of the abnormal skin growth, to send to the laboratory, where a Pathologist specialist doctor examines it under the microscope and sends back a diagnosis back to your doctor who can then select the proper treatment. The laboratory results generally take just over one working week to return. Once a diagnosis is given, the treatment needed can be discussed with you and organised. Sometimes no treatment is necessary if the growth is benign (not cancer)**

**How is a punch biopsy done?**

 **The skin sample is removed by a pencil like instrument which removes a cylinder of tissue after your skin is made numb by a local anaesthetic injection. You may feel pressure when the sample is taken but should not hurt. The small hole left can be sutured or left to heal with a small dressing in place.  A small round scar can occur after a punch biopsy or a short line scar if sutures were used. You will need sutures removed after 7-14 days depending on the site.**

**Care of the wound.**

**After the biopsy is done, the doctor will dress the wound with a topical solution of Tincture of Benzoin or an antibiotic ointment called Foban and cover with a padded sterile dressing. Pressure is usually applied with the fingers for about 10 minutes to stop any bleeding. The dressing can be left overnight, and then removed and a clean dressing placed if needed, such as a Band-aid.  Leaving the wound uncovered is also fine as it will form a normal scab and begin to shrink and dry.**

**If there is pain or discomfort after the punch biopsy, simple pain relief such as paracetamol 1gram, is usually adequate, although sometimes ibuprofen 400mg may be needed as well. This is not usually required on the second day.**

**Washing the wound after 1-2 days is advised, and keeping it clean will help prevent infection.**

**Complications.**

**Usually Punch biopsies heal easily and do not cause any trouble at all.  However a few complications are known to occur occasionally.**

* **Bleeding can occur after a Punch biopsy, and this will normally settle when firm finger pressure is applied to the wound for 10 – 20 minutes. However if bleeding continues, call the skin clinic or medical centre.**
* **Skin infection – this can occur with any surgical procedure and the signs are increased redness, or pain, pus or swelling at the punch biopsy site. Call your medical centre if this occurs.**
* **Pain is normally short-lived and mild, please take paracetamol if needed.**
* **Scar. Usually a punch biopsy scar is very small and not noticeable, but occasionally more obvious thickened scars can form or a skin colour difference.**