



Patient & Family Guide
2026

Stereotactic Biopsy

QE II Health Sciences
Centre



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Stereotactic Biopsy

Your doctor has told you that you may have a **tumour** (a lump or growth of abnormal cells) or a **lesion** (damaged tissue) in your brain.

You will need a surgical procedure called a **stereotactic biopsy** to:

- › Help your doctor find out what kind of tumour or lesion you have
- › Help your doctor diagnose and/or treat your brain condition (like a movement disorder, a pain syndrome, a tumour).

How is the procedure done?

- A **biopsy** is when a small sample of tissue is taken from your body for testing. The surgeon will take a tissue sample using a biopsy needle.
- A **pathologist** (a doctor who studies and diagnoses diseases) will look at the sample in the lab and diagnose your condition.

What will happen during the procedure?

- The stereotactic biopsy will be done in the operating room (O.R.).
- You will have:
 - › **General anesthetic** (medication to put you to sleep during surgery)
 - or
 - › **Sedation** (medication to help you relax)
- Most biopsies are done with general anesthetic. Your surgeon will talk with you about what is right for you.

- When you are in the O.R., an **anesthesiologist** will give you general anesthetic or sedation.
- When you are asleep or sedated, the surgeon will put your head in a clamp. This will keep your head still during the procedure.
- The clamp is held in place with pins. Your surgeon may need to shave some of your hair when they put the pins in. You will have **local anesthetic** (freezing) at the pin sites so you will not feel any pain.
- The surgeon will use **MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging) and/or **CT** (computed tomography) scans of your brain and an image guided system (a computer) to find:
 - › Where to take the biopsy from
 - › The best place to make the incision (cut) in your scalp
- Your surgeon may need to shave some of your hair around the incision site.
- The surgeon will make a small hole in your skull. They will put the biopsy needle through the hole to reach the tissue. Once they have taken a sample, they will take out the needle.
- The sample will be taken to the pathologist for a diagnosis. It usually takes 7 days (1 week) to get the diagnosis.

After your procedure

- You will be taken to the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU).

- The nurses in the PACU will closely check your:
 - › I.V.
 - › Blood pressure
 - › Pulse
 - › Breathing
 - › Dressings
 - › Oxygen levels
 - › Drainage tubes
- When you are ready, the PACU nurses will take you back to your hospital room.
- You may need to stay overnight in the hospital after this procedure.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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