

## Skin Biopsy Techniques

There are two basic biopsy techniques that are commonly used to evaluate skin lesions. These are excision and incisional biopsy.

- **Excision biopsy**

In this technique the entire lesion is excised and the tissue submitted for histopathology. This technique is most often applied to cutaneous tumours but can have some disadvantages. If the tumour is particularly invasive and a margin of excision is not achieved then further surgery will be required. Further, the neoplastic cells at the margin of a tumour are most likely to be actively dividing; debulking a mass may leave the most malignant cells behind.

- **Incision biopsy**

This technique is used to evaluate diffuse/generalised skin diseases or to identify a tumour before attempting its total removal. In either situation multiple samples should be collected in an attempt to obtain representative changes; a minimum of three biopsies should be collected.

Skin punch biopsies (6 mm diameter is the minimum recommended size) are recommended for the investigation of most skin diseases. Wedge excision is recommended for all nodules and tumours.