

# How Deep? - A randomised controlled trial into the surgical treatment of carbuncles

ACTRN12623000278639

---

Status	RECRUITING
Sponsor	Royal Darwin Hospital
Enrollment	124 participants

## Plain Language Summary

---

A carbuncle is a deep, painful skin infection — essentially a cluster of boils connected under the skin — that typically requires surgery to drain and clean out. The current standard surgical approach is called saucerisation, where the entire infected area is cut down to healthy tissue, often leaving a large open wound that can take weeks to heal and may require a skin graft. This trial is testing whether a less aggressive surgical approach — making a smaller cut to drain the pus and remove only the obviously infected tissue — gives equally good or better outcomes.

Patients diagnosed with a carbuncle (generally in remote Northern Australia) are randomly assigned to either the current standard full-thickness excision or the more conservative incision and drainage. The study will compare how long the wound takes to heal, whether a skin graft is needed, and how long patients need to stay in hospital or make follow-up trips for care.

You may be eligible if you are 18 or older and have been diagnosed with a carbuncle. People who are pregnant, breastfeeding, have significant health conditions that make surgery unsafe, or are under the Mental Health Act are not eligible.

## Key Eligibility Criteria

---

### Exclusion (7)

- Patients under 18 years of age.
- Patients who are pregnant.
- Patients who are breastfeeding.
- Non-operative candidates due to anaesthetic risk and significant comorbidities.
- Patients under Guardianship.

... and 2 more (see full listing online)

## Locations (1 total)

---

Royal Darwin Hospital - Tiwi, NT, Australia