

Patient information

Outpatient Liver Biopsy

Gastroenterology and Hepatology Speciality

Your Consultant or doctor has advised you to have a liver biopsy.

What is a liver biopsy?

A biopsy is a tiny sample of body tissue, in this case liver tissue. This tissue is viewed under a microscope.

What are the benefits of a liver biopsy?

It helps the doctor to make an exact diagnosis and determine the extent of your condition. It is a vital piece of information to help decide on your management and treatment.

What are the risks of a liver biopsy?

In most instances, a liver biopsy is obtained quickly with no problems.

However:

- occasionally some pain in the right shoulder is experienced..
- you may have a slight swelling or bruise over the biopsy area
- rarely, the needle can puncture a blood vessel or bile duct. The risk of significant bleeding is less than 1 in 500. It can be serious enough to require an operation and very rarely, death has been reported due to complications (studies have shown this to happen in about one in 10,000 times). This risk should be balanced against the risks of not doing a biopsy..
- injury to lungs, intestine or gallbladder can also rarely occur
- we take every precaution to make the biopsy as safe as possible for you.

Are there any alternatives to this procedure?

This is the only procedure for obtaining tissue from the liver

What will happen if I don't have this procedure done?

It will be difficult for the doctor to diagnose what is the matter with you and you may get worse if your problem cannot be treated.

What anaesthetic or sedation will I be given?

You will be given a local anaesthetic. Local anaesthesia is drug-induced numbness: it may be provided by an anaesthetist, surgeon or other healthcare professional, depending on the technique used.

Serious side effects are rare, and include fits, low blood pressure, slowed breathing and changes in heartbeat, which may be life-threatening. If you have any concerns about any of these effects, you should discuss them with your doctor.

The risks of anaesthesia and surgery are lower for those who are undergoing minor surgery, and who are young, fit, active and well.

You will be given an opportunity to discuss anaesthetic options and risks before your surgery.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your Consultant or a member of their team.

Getting ready for your liver biopsy

- A pre-biopsy assessment visit will be arranged for you. At this visit you will have blood samples taken. It is also an opportunity for you to discuss the biopsy procedure with a senior nurse.
- You will have an ultrasound scan performed before your liver biopsy.
- **If you are taking Aspirin can you please stop taking it seven days before your liver biopsy**

Your liver biopsy

Your liver biopsy is usually performed in Interventional Theatre as a day case by a trained clinician. On arrival a nurse will check your details and you will be asked to change into a gown. A majority of the time the biopsy is done with the help of an ultrasound scan to biopsy a particular part of the liver or to avoid other structures.

- You will remain on your bed for your biopsy.
- The clinician will use an ultrasound guide to decide on the best location to insert the biopsy needle (usually between your two lower ribs on your right hand side).
- Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic fluid and you will be covered with a sterile sheet.
- The clinician will give you an injection of local anaesthetic which will cause some stinging at first and then go numb.
- A nurse will be with you who will monitor your pulse and blood pressure. Please let the nurse know if you feel any discomfort.
- The biopsy needle will be inserted through your skin into your liver and a sample will be collected.
- You will have to hold your breath for five to ten seconds when asked, as the liver moves slightly when you breathe.
- A small dressing will be placed over the needle site.
- The procedure takes about 30 minutes to complete, but may take longer.

Will I feel anything?

You may have pain or discomfort during or after the liver biopsy. This can be in the stomach, chest or right shoulder. However, this is usually temporary and medication can be given to relieve this.

After the liver biopsy

- A sticking plaster will be placed over the biopsy area.
- You will be asked to stay on bed rest for approximately six hours.
- A member of the nursing staff will regularly monitor your blood pressure, pulse and biopsy area.
- An aftercare information leaflet will be given to you when you are discharged.

Results

The liver biopsy will be processed by the pathology laboratory, which can take anything between two and four weeks for all the tests to be arranged. The results will be discussed with you during your follow-up appointment in clinic.

Cancellations

If you are unable to keep this appointment, please let us know as soon as possible on

Tel: 0151 706 2725

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2725

We will be able to give your appointment to another patient, and arrange another for you.

Transport

- Transport has not been arranged for this appointment so it will be necessary for you to make your own arrangements.
- If you have been referred to us by your family doctor (GP) and require an ambulance please contact their surgery.

Going Home

Once you have completed the recovery stage you can usually go home, however you will require a responsible adult to collect you from the unit and stay with you for 24 hours after the biopsy to watch for the unusual symptoms listed on the aftercare leaflet. The aftercare leaflet you will be given will also have a contact number on for any queries.

Further appointments

If you do not already have an appointment to return to clinic to see your doctor, we will ensure that a follow-up clinic appointment is sent to you usually between four to six weeks.

Further information:

If you have any questions or queries, please contact :

Senior Administrator

Tel: 0151 706 2725

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2725

Specialist Nurse

Tel: 0151 706 3850

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3850

The Emergency Department (A&E) Department is open 24 hours.

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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