

# Liver biopsy

**If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format  
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.**

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،  
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,  
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,  
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe  
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق  
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

## Introduction

This leaflet tells you about the procedure known as a liver biopsy. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. If you are having the biopsy done as a pre-planned procedure, then you should have plenty of time to discuss the situation with your doctor. If you need the biopsy done as an emergency, then there may be less time for discussion, but you should still have had sufficient explanation before you sign the consent form.

## What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is a common procedure when a small sample of liver tissue is removed using a needle, using only a tiny incision in your right side. The tissue sample is then examined under a microscope.

A liver biopsy is used to diagnose and monitor certain conditions of the liver, or to see if a specific treatment is working.



## Why do I need a liver biopsy?

Investigations have shown an abnormality in your liver, but it is not always possible to determine the cause or degree of these abnormalities by using only scans or blood tests.

To get a better idea of what is wrong, we need to obtain a small sample of liver tissue and examine it under a microscope.

Make sure you understand what is involved before you sign the consent form, remember that you can change your mind about having the biopsy at any time.

## What are the benefits of a liver biopsy?

The benefits of the test are that it can help your doctor to:

- Identify the liver disease.
- Assess for the presence and extent of any liver damage.
- Guide future management decisions.

## What if I choose not to have a liver biopsy?

If you have been advised to have a liver biopsy and choose not to, your doctor may not be able to accurately diagnose your condition and treat it appropriately.

## Are there any alternatives to a liver biopsy?

There is no alternative procedure that will give your doctor the same information as a liver biopsy.

## Are there any risks or complications?

For the majority of patients having a liver biopsy, complications are a rare occurrence.

The most common complication is pain - approximately 30% of patients experience this and it is well controlled with simple painkillers.

Bleeding is usually minimal and often resolves by itself. Occasionally more serious bleeding can occur (1 in 300 biopsies) which requires specific treatment. 1 in 4 patients who experience serious blood loss will require a transfusion.

The risk of injury to other organs with the needle is very small - less than 1 in 1,000 cases - using ultrasound guidance helps to locate the liver and keep this risk to a minimum.

## What happens once I have agreed to have the liver biopsy?

The nurses/radiology staff will check the relevant blood tests are up to date. If more blood tests are needed, you will need to attend for these five days before your procedure.

It is important that you tell the doctor/nurse arranging your liver biopsy about any tablets you are taking. This is especially important in respect of those tablets that thin the blood or affect the clotting, as these may need stopping up to one week before the biopsy.

These tablets are:

- Apixaban
- Edoxaban
- Aspirin
- Clopidogrel
- Dabigatran
- Rivaroxaban
- Ticagrelor
- Warfarin

## On the day of the procedure

### Who will perform the biopsy?

A consultant radiologist or a specialist registrar in radiology who is being specially trained in this procedure may perform the biopsy. They will use ultrasound to locate the best area of your liver to take the sample, to avoid any other internal organs.

### Where do I come to on the day of the liver biopsy?

The test will be done on the Cardiac Diagnostic Centre (CDC) at Whiston Hospital. However your appointment letter should stipulate which ward to report to beforehand. This may include 3D Day Case Unit based on Ward 3D or Ward 4B.

## How long will I be in hospital for?

Most patients have this procedure done as a day case, however, it is a good idea to pack an overnight bag just in case. Your procedure will take place at some point in the morning and post procedure we observe you for a recovery period for 6 hours. This could mean in total you may be in hospital for 8-9 hours on the day of the procedure. **You must have someone to collect you and take you home – you cannot drive.** It is also preferable if they could stay with you at home in case you become unwell. Unfortunately, for the privacy and dignity of other patients, friends and relatives are not permitted to stay on the unit while you are a patient.

Some patients may be required to stay overnight and this is at the discretion of your doctor or the specialist carrying out the procedure. You will be informed prior to coming into hospital so you can prepare an overnight bag. Visitors will be allowed at visiting times on your allocated ward, but not on CDC.

## Can I eat and drink before the procedure?

You will need to be nil by mouth from midnight on the day of the test.

## Medications - please bring all your medications with you on the day.

Critical medication only can be taken with a small sip of water on the day of the procedure. Your medication review should be discussed with your doctor or radiology team before the procedure.

Some blood pressure medications may make you need to pass urine more frequently, which will make you uncomfortable during the procedure, therefore it would be best to leave these until after your procedure.

If you are diabetic and have insulin injections, please contact your diabetes nurse specialist for advice regarding taking your insulin and starving for a procedure.

## What happens before the procedure?

The nurses will settle you into the ward, you will be made comfortable on a trolley and they may take your blood pressure and pulse. You may have a needle inserted into your hand and a blood sample may be taken if you have not had any taken recently.

The radiologist will come and discuss the procedure with you and ask you to complete a consent form - you can ask any questions or raise concerns at this point.

Sedation is not routinely given for this procedure.

You will be asked to wear a gown that allows easy accessibility to your right side; you can leave your lower underwear on. You should use the toilet prior to your procedure to make sure you feel as comfortable as possible during the procedure.

## What happens during the biopsy?

You will be taken into a room where the ultrasound scanner and sterile equipment are used for taking your biopsy. A radiologist and nurse assistant will be present; the staff will talk to you throughout and help put you at ease.

You will be asked to lie flat on the bed, with your right hand under your head.

The doctor will work out exactly where your liver is by performing an ultrasound scan - it is normally situated on the right hand side just under the lower ribs.

They will then put some disinfectant on your skin and will anaesthetise the skin with a local anaesthetic injection. This may sting initially, and then your skin will go numb.

You will be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds while the biopsy is taken. A needle will be inserted through your skin and a very small piece of your liver will be taken to send for further tests.

The whole procedure takes between 15 and 20 minutes, however, the actual biopsy takes a few seconds. Sometimes we need to take 2 or 3 samples to try and get enough tissue to analyse under the microscope. A plaster will be applied to the spot the sample was taken from.

## Will it hurt?

You will feel a stinging sensation when the local anaesthetic is injected. You may feel some slight discomfort when the biopsy needle takes the sample from the liver. It is quite common to feel discomfort after your biopsy in your right shoulder and/or your biopsy site. Please inform the nursing staff of any discomfort so they can give painkillers and monitor for any improvement.

## What happens after the procedure?

You will be taken back to your allocated bed space. You will need to lie on your right side for 30 minutes; you can then lie flat for 1.5 hours. After this you will be sat up but will lie on your back for 2 hours. You will be in bed for approximately 4 hours and will be on the ward for 6 hours post procedure.

Your pulse and blood pressure will be monitored regularly throughout the day, and pain killers will be given by the nurses if you need them.

If you are a planned day case and are well, you will be allowed home with your designated carer. If you are a planned admission, you will be transferred to your designated in-patient ward once a bed is available.

## Questions?

Please write any questions you think of and bring them with you on the day.

## After the procedure

### Discharge advice for patients following liver biopsy

This leaflet should be read along with any advice given to you from your doctor or nurse. If you are concerned about any symptoms after your discharge, you should contact Whiston Hospital Emergency Department or your own GP for advice. You should seek immediate care from your nearest emergency department or call 999 for an ambulance if you get:

- Increased or new bleeding from your biopsy site.
- Increased pain at the biopsy site, in your abdomen, chest or right shoulder.
- Difficulty in breathing.
- If your abdomen becomes swollen.
- If you become light headed, weak or dizzy or you become feverish.

### When you get home

- There may be a spot of blood on the dressing over the biopsy site, this is normal.
- You can eat and drink normally.
- Do not drive for 24 hours after the procedure.
- Do stay within 30 minutes of a hospital (preferably but not necessarily Whiston).
- Have someone stay with you overnight after your biopsy.
- When the local anaesthetic wears off you may feel some mild pain and soreness. You may feel this in your neck or right shoulder region.
- You may take some simple pain killers for your discomfort, e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Do not take aspirin for 48 hours.
- You should rest for the first 24 hours after the biopsy, but you do not have to stay in bed.
- You can perform normal daily activities around the house or walk reasonable distances/go up and down stairs.
- You may return to work or other light activities if they do not involve lifting or straining but avoid strenuous activities for 48 hours.

If the biopsy site starts to ooze fluid or becomes red, hot or sore you may be developing an infection at the site and you should contact your doctor for advice.

## After the biopsy

You will not get any results on the day, however your doctor may decide to start you on treatment before the results if they feel that will be best for you and your liver.

The biopsy results can take up to three weeks while the laboratory completes all the tests. The results will be sent to your specialist, who will inform you of them and any change in your treatment that may be required.

## Useful contact numbers:

Liver nurse helpline	0151 430 1981
Radiology appointments	0151 430 1233
Diabetes Centre	01744 646 266

## For more information about liver tests and liver problems:

British Liver Trust

[www.britishlivertrust.org.uk](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk)

0800 652 7330

**There may be students and observers present during your consultation as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like a chaperone present during your procedure.**

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road,  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital  
Marshall Cross Road,  
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA  
Telephone: 01744 26633