

Liver Biopsy

Patient information

This leaflet can be made available
in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona
w innych językach/formatach.

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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 a relative emergency, then there may be less time for discussion, but none the less **you should 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, to 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 solely using 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.

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

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
- 0800 652 7330

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 A & E department or your own G.P. for advice.

You should seek immediate care from your nearest A & E 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.

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 3-5 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. Your specialist may also need to refer your biopsy results to the multi-disciplinary team for review if the results need confirming or discussion.

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 pain-killers.

Bleeding is usually minimal and this 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 blood product transfusion.

The risk of injury to other organs with the needle is very small - less than 1 in 1,000 cases:- using ultra-sound 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 5 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 1 week before the biopsy. These tablets are:

- Apixoban
- Aspirin
- Clopidogrel
- Dabigatran
- Rivaroxaban
- Ticagrelor
- Warfarin

On the day of your 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 and to avoid any other internal organs.

The specialist performing the procedure will talk you through it as they go along to reassure you and so you ensure you know what to expect.

Questions?

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

What happens after the procedure?

You will be taken back to the main ward or CDC on the trolley where 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 require 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 inpatient ward once a bed is available.

Where will the biopsy take place?

You will be admitted to the Cardiac Diagnostic Centre (CDC) at Whiston Hospital. Alternatively, you may be asked to attend the Ward 3D Treatment Unit or the Endoscopy Day case unit.

This all depends on bed occupancy and who has booked you in for the procedure. Your specialist will liaise this information with you. However, every procedure will be performed by a specialist radiologist in a controlled clean environment.

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.

You will be in hospital for approximately 6 - 8 hours; **you must have someone to collect you and take you home – you will not be able to drive after procedure.** It is preferable if they could stay with you at home overnight, 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 if you are on CDC.

Can I eat and drink before the procedure?

You will need to starve (no food or drink) for 4 hours prior to your procedure. We advise for morning procedures that you get up early around 6.00 am and have a light early breakfast with a drink, after this you must not have anything else until after your liver biopsy.

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

You may take your medications with your breakfast or you can wait until after your 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 omit 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 special room where the ultrasound scanner and sterile equipment is used for taking your biopsy. A radiologist and nurse assistants will be present, the staff will talk to you throughout and help put you at ease.

This is what happens next:

1. You will be asked to lie flat on your bed with your right hand under your head.
2. 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.
3. He/she 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.
4. 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 pain killers and monitor for any improvement.