

# Liver biopsy



## **What is a liver biopsy?**

A liver biopsy is a medical test, where a small sample of tissue is removed from your liver with a needle. The sample is then examined under a microscope.

## **Why do I need it?**

Having a biopsy will help your doctor to make a correct diagnosis so that you can get suitable treatment. Investigations have shown an abnormality in your liver, but it is not always possible to determine the cause or degree of these abnormalities by looking at scans alone. The simplest way to make a diagnosis is to examine a sample of liver tissue under the microscope.

## **How do I prepare for it?**

You can come into hospital, have a liver biopsy and go home the same day. You will need to arrange for someone to take you home by car or taxi.

You will need to have a blood test about one week before the liver biopsy to check that your blood clotting is normal. This test is necessary as there is increased risk of bleeding after a procedure if your clotting tests are abnormal. Your doctor or clinical nurse specialist will tell you about this test and how to arrange it when they recommend a liver biopsy.

If you are taking warfarin, or any anti-platelet medicine such as Clopidogrel, Prasugrel, Ticagrelor, Dabigatran or Rivaroxaban, please call the Radiology secretaries on 01872 252285.

Let your doctor know about any medicines you are taking. Take your other medicines as normal, unless your doctor or nurse tells you not to.

If you are having the biopsy while you are staying in hospital, your nurse will help you to prepare.

## **What will happen?**

A liver biopsy is usually performed on a day case basis. In some circumstances, you may be asked to stay overnight in hospital for observation.

The doctor will explain how the biopsy will be performed and the risks involved. The doctor will then ask you to sign the consent form to give your permission for the biopsy to go ahead. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask the doctor.

1. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and lie on a bed in the ultrasound room.
2. The doctor will spread some gel on your skin and use the ultrasound probe to decide the best position from which to take the tissue sample. This will usually be on the right hand side of your abdomen and below or between your lower ribs.
3. The doctor will clean the skin and drape the area with sterile towels. A small needle will be used to inject local anaesthetic to numb the area. This will cause some stinging at first but should not be too uncomfortable. You are not sedated for the procedure.
4. The biopsy needle will be inserted through the skin into your liver and a sample collected. During the biopsy procedure, the doctor may ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds, as the liver moves slightly when you breathe.
5. Two or three tissue samples may be taken to ensure that the specimens provide as much information as possible.

The biopsy procedure takes about 30 minutes.

### **What happens afterwards?**

Following your biopsy you will stay in the recovery unit. You will need to stay in bed for 4-6 hours, or as instructed by the doctor or nurse. You will be asked to lie on your right side for 1 hour, your back for 1 hour and then sit for 1 hour. You will then be able to mobilise (move around) under supervision until you are ready for discharge. Your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will be checked regularly during this recovery period.

### **Are there any risks or complications?**

There may be bruising or a small area of swelling around the biopsy area due to bleeding into the skin. This should not be painful and will heal.

There is a small risk of internal bleeding after the biopsy. If you take aspirin or warfarin, or if you have a bleeding disorder, there may be a greater chance of bleeding from the biopsy site. This is why you will stay in hospital for four or more hours after the procedure, so that we can monitor you.

### **When will I get my results?**

The results can take approximately 30 working days, when these are available you will receive a letter at which point you should make an appointment to see the doctor who referred you so that you can discuss the results.

### **What happens when I go home?**

Following your procedure you should rest for the remainder of the day and possibly the next day, depending on your recovery.

- You will need to have someone to stay with you overnight.
- You can eat and drink normally.
- Take your usual pain relief, as prescribed, if you have any pain.
- Continue with all normal medication as prescribed.
- Keep a regular check of the biopsy site.
- Shower no sooner than 24 hours after the procedure, and bath no sooner than 48 hours after.
- Avoid any heavy lifting for 24 hours.
- Do not drive for 24 hours.

### **Contact us**

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact Interventional Radiology on 01872 253962.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

