

A guide to your liver biopsy

Your consultant has asked for you to have a liver biopsy. This will be performed in a special room on the ward or in the Radiology Department. The most appropriate place will be chosen for your circumstances.

If you are taking **warfarin, aspirin or any other anticoagulant tablets**, please telephone the Royal Derby Hospital on 01332 788652 and ask for the nurse in charge.

What is a liver biopsy and why do I need one?

A liver biopsy involves taking a small tissue sample from the liver through the skin under local anaesthetic. This tissue sample is examined in the Pathology Department to assess the liver for disease.

What are the benefits of having a liver biopsy?

To diagnose any liver disease that may need treatment.

What are the risks, consequences and alternatives associated with having a liver biopsy?

As with any biopsy, there is a very small chance of side-effects or complications, which include:

1. The common, minor after-effect expected in most patients, when the effect of the local anaesthetic wears off, is to feel *some aching in the area of the biopsy or your right shoulder blade*. This is due to bruising around the biopsy site and is not serious or dangerous. Painkillers are available on the ward, so please ask the ward staff if you need them.
2. Rarely, more significant complications could occur and these include:
 - Bleeding from the bile ducts into the bowel which can result in the bowel motion becoming black
 - Bleeding from the biopsy site
 - Puncturing the lining of the lung
 - Injury to internal organs close to the liver

The chance of each of these complications is less than 1% (this figure has been taken from national and international research), and is minimised by performing the biopsy in the Ultrasound Room.

Your consultant considers that the potential benefit from the biopsy is far greater than any risk from complications in your case.

Your consultant has recommended this procedure as being the best option. There are no alternative procedures to obtain tissue for diagnosis. However, there is always the choice of not having the biopsy. If you would like more information, please speak to your consultant or to one of the nurses caring for you.

If you are concerned about these risks, or have any further queries, please contact your consultant before your liver biopsy.

Getting ready for the procedure

You will have your admission documentation completed and a blood test arranged for a time before you come in for your liver biopsy. This is to ensure that you are prepared and the blood test results are available for the time of your biopsy.

Despite this preparation, it may be necessary to cancel/postpone the biopsy depending on the results of the blood test.

You should have an early breakfast on the morning of your biopsy. You will be advised of the actual times.

IF YOU ARE DIABETIC:

Take your normal dose of Insulin and diabetic tablets with your breakfast. Your blood sugar will be checked on the ward. Please tell the ward that you are diabetic when you are admitted.

You will be admitted to hospital on the morning of your test. You will be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any questions or worries, please raise them either with the nurse, consultant, or the radiologist (x-ray doctor) on the ward.

You will be asked to put on a hospital gown.

What happens during my liver biopsy?

You will stay on your bed or a trolley throughout your liver biopsy. We will take you into the room, which is often dark. We will check your notes and blood test results, then explain what will happen during the test.

We will put some warm jelly on your stomach and use the ultrasound machine to find the best position to take the liver biopsy. You may be asked to lie on your back or on your left side during the scan and biopsy. It is important to stay quite still once the best position has been found.

The skin over the area where the biopsy is taken, will be cleaned with antiseptic and numbed with local anaesthetic, this may sting. You will be awake throughout the whole procedure.

You will be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds as the biopsy is being taken. You will hear a small click as the sample is taken. This is usually done only once but may be repeated as long as it is safe to do so.

What happens after my liver biopsy?

You will be taken back to your ward area. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked regularly over the next few hours. You will be asked to stay in bed for a few hours to help the biopsy site to heal quickly. After this you will be asked to mobilise around the ward.

After the nurse has checked you have recovered from the biopsy, you should be allowed home and will be discharged under the Nurse Led Discharge Protocol.

DISCHARGE INFORMATION AND AT HOME ADVICE

You should not experience any problems once you get home, but it is important to ensure that you are not alone at home for 24 hours after the biopsy. If you have not arranged this, you may have to stay in hospital overnight.

If you notice a sudden change in the colour of your motions (eg. a black tar colour), contact your GP for further advice, as this may be a sign of internal bleeding.

You may bathe and wash as normal after your discharge from hospital.

You may return to work/normal activities normally about 3 days after the biopsy but should refrain from any heavy lifting for at least 2 weeks.

An **outpatient appointment** will be made with your consultant team to discuss the result. This can be between 2 - 6 weeks after the biopsy depending on the reason for the biopsy.

References

Complications in diagnostic imaging and interventional radiography. Ansell, G., *et al.* Blackwell Science, inc. 1996

If you have any queries, or require further information
please telephone the Royal Derby Hospital on 01332 340131
and ask for your ward or the X-ray Department.