

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

It is a test where a tiny sample of tissue is removed from your liver with a needle.

## **Why do I need one?**

Often scans and blood tests will not tell the whole story, and a biopsy is needed to make the correct diagnosis. This will help to guide suitable treatment.

## **Who performs it?**

A specially trained doctor - called a radiologist - will perform the biopsy using an ultrasound machine to ensure that the sample is taken from exactly the right place.

## **What can I expect during the procedure?**

- You will be in the ultrasound room for about 30 minutes, but most of that time is spent talking to you and preparing for the procedure – the biopsy itself usually only takes a few minutes.
- The radiologist will first scan your liver and mark on your skin where best to take the biopsy from.
- Your skin will then be cleaned with antiseptic solution and draped with sterile towels, before local anaesthetic is injected around the biopsy site.
- You will be asked to hold your breath momentarily during the biopsy itself to make sure that the liver is stationary.
- The biopsy needle will make a clicking sound when the sample is taken.
- Often the biopsy will be repeated immediately in the same place to make sure that enough tissue is obtained.
- A small plaster will be applied afterwards. No stitches will be required.

## **Will it be painful?**

The local anaesthetic will sting briefly before the area goes numb. A few people get momentary discomfort as the biopsy needle enters the liver, but there is usually no sharp sensation and the majority of people feel very little during the procedure.

## **What are the risks?**

A liver biopsy is a very safe procedure, but there are still some small risks for you to be aware of. Mild local skin swelling and bruising afterwards is very common. Pain after the procedure is quite common (about 1 in 3 people), either at the biopsy site or in the right shoulder but is usually mild.

Significant internal bleeding after the biopsy is uncommon (less than 1 in 300 people), but if this does occur you may require a blood transfusion or a further radiological procedure/operation. Inadvertent damage to adjacent structures is rare (less than 1 in

1000 people).

### **How can I prepare for the biopsy?**

- You will need to have a blood test 3 to 7 days before the date of your liver biopsy. This can be done by either your GP Practice nurse or you can have the blood test taken at the Phlebotomy Department, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital which is located at:
  - East Block Level 3 Outpatient Department (Mon —Fri 0830 to 1655)
  - West Block Level 3 Outpatient Department (Mon - Fri 0830 - 1655)

**Warfarin / Phenindione / Clopidogrel (Plavix), Apixaban, Dabigatran, Ticagrelor, Prasugrel, Low Molecular Weight Heparin, Intravenous Heparin or any other blood thinning agent (anti- coagulant).** If you are taking any of the above, please inform the Ultrasound Appointments Office on 01603 288469 or 01603 288474 as soon as possible, as you will need to stop taking them for a limited time before the procedure.

- You may eat a light diet before the biopsy
  - Breakfast — a small bowl of cereal or a slice of toast. Tea or coffee with milk. Clear fluids as desired.
  - Lunch - half a sandwich or a small bowl of soup. Tea or coffee with milk. Clear fluids as desired.
- Please bring a list of your current medication and give it to the nurse on arrival.
- An IV cannula will be inserted on the ward prior to the biopsy, so that any medicines can easily be given if needed.
- It is a good idea to go to the toilet before the procedure because you'll need to stay in bed for a few hours afterwards.

### **What happens after the liver biopsy?**

You will need to lie flat, or on your right side, for a couple of hours afterwards and you will be offered pain relief if needed. Your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will be checked at regular intervals. You will need to stay in bed for four to six hours, or as instructed by the nurse. You will usually then be allowed to go home.



## What do I need to do after I go home?

- Please rest for the remainder of the day.
- Eat and drink normally.
- Continue your normal medication as prescribed. Usually it will be safe to restart any blood thinning medicine the following day, but this must be discussed with the doctors on the ward before discharge.
- Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity for a couple of days. Do not participate in contact sports for at least a week.
- Keep a regular check on the site from where the biopsy was taken.

**In an emergency** go to the Accident and Emergency Department or contact the Gastroenterology Specialist liver nurse on 01603 288846 (Mon to Fri only).

## How will I get the results?

Depending on urgency, it may take a couple of weeks for the interpretation of your biopsy to be completed, after which your consultant will arrange an appointment in the outpatient clinic, or write to you with the results.

## Access to Radiology

How to find us:	East Outpatients entrance and follow the signs to Level 2 Radiology. You can find more information at: <a href="http://www.nnuh.nhs.uk">www.nnuh.nhs.uk</a>
Hospital transport:	To enquire about hospital transport telephone 0333 240 4100
Contact details:	<b>Telephone:</b> Ultrasound appointments 01603 288469 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ultrasound@nnuh.nhs.uk">ultrasound@nnuh.nhs.uk</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.nnuh.nhs.uk">www.nnuh.nhs.uk</a>

