

# Liver Biopsy

## What is a percutaneous liver biopsy?

A small piece of tissue is taken from your liver for examination under the microscope. The tissue is obtained using a small needle which is inserted through the skin on the right side of your chest.

The skin is numbed with local anaesthetic, the distance to the liver is measured and the needle is placed into the liver substance. During the liver biopsy you will be asked to hold your breath, you will need to be alert during the procedure. You will feel "pressure" when the needle enters through the liver capsule. A piece of liver the size of the tip of a match is removed. Sometimes two passes are necessary to obtain a good specimen.

## Why do I need a liver biopsy?

Liver function blood tests are useful to establish there is a liver disturbance but often examining liver tissue may be the only way to establish a definite diagnosis or determine the severity of the liver disease.

## What are the possible complications?

A liver biopsy is a safe procedure overall but serious complications may occur uncommonly (1 in 500 procedures). The major problems are **bleeding** or **perforation** (making a hole) of bowel, gallbladder, lung or kidney. A blood transfusion may be necessary if bleeding is severe. Very rarely surgery may be required after a biopsy to repair damage. Death is a remote possibility with any interventional procedure.

Generally about half of the people undergoing biopsy experience pain. This pain is felt almost immediately in the right shoulder or at the biopsy site and Paracetamol usually gives control.

## What is the protocol?

Prior to the procedure you will have a liver ultrasound or CT scan and blood taken for blood cross match and routine baseline blood tests, including blood coagulation studies. Do not take Aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication, Warfarin, Heparin, Plavix or Iscover or any other blood thinning preparations for 7 days before the procedure.

You will be required to come to the hospital facility fasting and baseline observations (pulse, blood pressure, temperature, oxygen saturation) will be checked. An intravenous cannula will be placed in your arm and in due course you will be taken to the Radiology Department for the procedure. Generally CT scanning or ultrasound facilities are used to assist in the procedure.

You will remain in the hospital facility for at least 4 hours and frequent observation checks will be made during that time.

**Report any severe pain, abdominal distension, faintness or shortness of breath.**

I agree to have a percutaneous liver biopsy and declare that I have read and understood the above information

Signature:.....

Date:.....