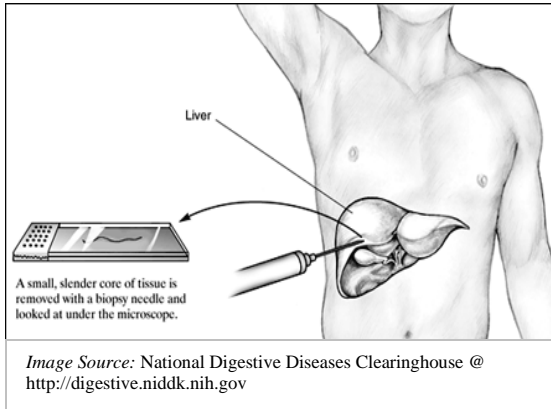


Greenwich Hospital

What is a Liver Biopsy

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET



What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is a minor surgical procedure in which a small piece of tissue from your liver is removed, using a needle, for examination under a microscope. This procedure is generally ordered by your doctor after other tests, such as blood tests, which indicate that the liver may not be working properly. Biopsy is the best way to look at the liver tissue to confirm whether the liver is healthy or shows signs of damage or disease.

Is there any special preparation for the biopsy?

- Prior to the procedure, blood tests are usually done to make sure that your blood clots normally.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking any aspirin-containing medications or any anti-clotting medications. You may be asked to stop taking these medications for 5 to 7 days prior to the procedure. This includes medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Alleve, Coumadin, and heparin.
- Discuss with your doctor other medications you are taking. He or she will tell you whether you should take these medicines on the morning of the biopsy.
- You cannot have anything to eat or drink for 8 hours prior to the procedure. (Your doctor may tell you to take your regular medications with a sip of water).
- If you are having this procedure done as an outpatient, **you must arrange to have a ride home. You will not be allowed to drive yourself home.**

How is the liver biopsy performed?

- You will be asked to put on a hospital gown.
- You may have an intravenous catheter started in one of your arms.
- You will go by stretcher to the procedure room in the Diagnostic Imaging Department.
- If necessary, a sedative can be given to you. Many patients do not require a sedative for this procedure.
- You will lie on your back on the examining table with your right hand raised above your head.

- You will be asked to hold very still during the procedure so that the liver can be sampled as accurately as possible. The Radiologist performing the procedure will use ultrasound to pick the best site for the sampling.
- You will be given a local anesthetic (numbing medicine) in the area where the needle is to be inserted and a small nick will be made in the skin.
- You will be asked to hold your breath (for about 10 seconds) while a biopsy needle is inserted into the liver and a small sample of liver tissue is removed. You may feel dull pain or more likely pressure during the needle insertion.
- The Radiologist usually takes 3 samples to obtain adequate tissue for diagnosis.
- The procedure takes about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Most of this time is preparation and set-up.

Are there any risks involved with the biopsy?

Like any surgery, there are some risks associated with a liver biopsy. These include:

- Pain (most common)
- Bleeding
- Puncture of lung or gallbladder
- Infection

Are there any special instructions after the biopsy?

After the procedure, you will have a bandage put on the area which was sampled. You will remain in the hospital for a period of 2 hours for observation. This is routine and is done for all liver biopsy patients. During this time, you will be asked not to eat or drink anything except occasional sips of water and a nurse will check your vital signs. If you experience pain or discomfort, let your nurse know.

If you are having this procedure done as an outpatient, you must have a ride home. You cannot drive yourself home. You must also go directly home and remain in bed, except to use the bathroom, for 8 to 12 hours or as directed by your doctor. Your doctor may also advise you to avoid exertion for a week after the procedure to allow the liver to heal fully.

You may have some soreness in the area of the biopsy and/or pain radiating into your right shoulder. The shoulder pain is caused by irritation of the diaphragm muscle and usually disappears within a few of days. Your doctor may order a mild pain reliever, such as Tylenol. Do not take any medications containing aspirin until directed by your doctor.

Source: American Liver Foundation @ www.liverfoundation.org Retrieved August 2005.
National Digestive Diseases Clearinghouse @ <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov> Retrieved August 2005.

For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and Click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education