

Liver Biopsy

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy involves removing small pieces of tissue from your liver using a needle.

What are the benefits of a liver biopsy?

Your doctor is concerned that there may be a problem with your liver. Your doctor will tell you which of the following problems is most likely in your case.

- Inflammation (hepatitis)
- Cirrhosis
- A tumour

Are there any alternatives to a liver biopsy?

A blood test or ultrasound scan may show that you have a problem. Specialised scans can tell your doctor how serious it is. However, a biopsy will help to find out exactly what is causing the problem and will help your doctor to recommend the best treatment for you.

What does the procedure involve?

A liver biopsy usually takes less than 30 minutes.

Your doctor will inject local anaesthetic into the area where the needle will be inserted.

The two commonly-used techniques are ultrasound-guided liver biopsy and transjugular liver biopsy.

Ultrasound-guided liver biopsy

Your doctor will make a small cut on the skin over your liver. They will insert the needle through the cut and into your liver to remove a small piece of tissue. They will often use an ultrasound scan to guide them while they perform the biopsy.

Transjugular liver biopsy

Your doctor will make a small cut on your skin on the right side of your neck and then insert a catheter (tube) into your jugular vein. They will use x-rays to help them guide the tube through your veins.

When the tube reaches your liver, your doctor will pass a needle down the tube and into your liver. Your doctor will ask you to hold your breath while they remove a small piece of tissue.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

- Bleeding
- Inflammation of the lining of your abdomen
- Making a hole in nearby structures with the needle
- Allergic reaction
- Infection

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

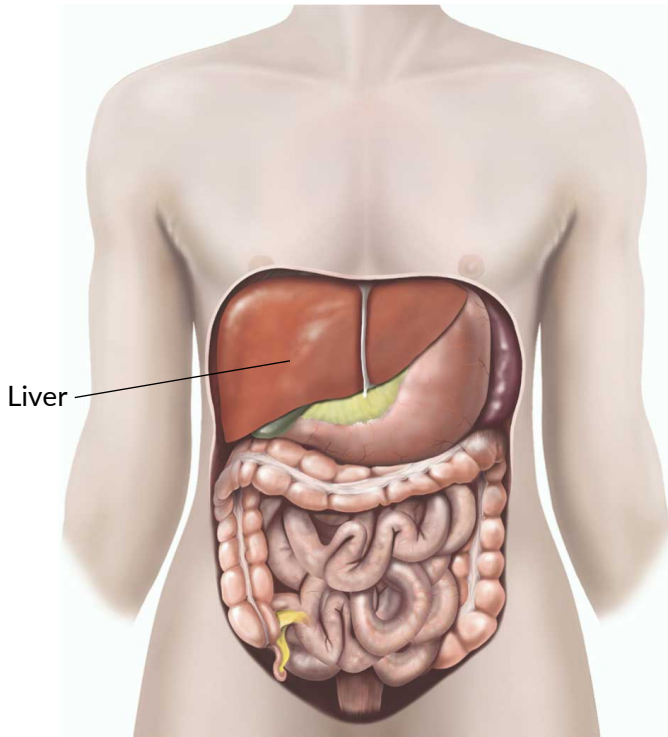
You should be able to return to work the next day unless you are told otherwise. Do not do strenuous exercise for 1 to 2 days.

The healthcare team will discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

A liver biopsy is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if there is a problem with your liver.



The position of the liver

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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