

# Percutaneous liver biopsy

## Patient information factsheet

### What is a percutaneous liver biopsy?

- A percutaneous liver biopsy is a medical procedure used to take a small sample of tissue from your liver.
- A specially designed needle is passed through the skin to obtain the sample, which is then examined under a microscope.
- “Percutaneous” means that the biopsy is performed through the skin.

### Why do I need a percutaneous liver biopsy?

- The decision to perform a liver biopsy is made by the Consultant responsible for your care, usually a Hepatologist (liver specialist).
- A liver biopsy provides information about your liver that cannot always be obtained from blood tests or imaging scans.
- In some cases, it is the only way to confirm a diagnosis and decide on the most appropriate treatment for your condition.

### Are there alternatives to a liver biopsy?

- There is currently no alternative test or procedure that provides the same detailed information as a liver biopsy

### Before the procedure

#### Blood Tests

- You will need a blood test before the biopsy to ensure your blood clots normally and that it is safe to proceed.

#### Medications

- You can usually continue taking your regular medications unless advised otherwise by your Doctor or Nurse.

- If you take blood-thinning medications (such as aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, rivaroxaban, dabigatran, or apixaban), your medication may need to be adjusted before the procedure.
- The interventional radiology team will advise when to stop the medication before the biopsy.

### **Eating and Drinking**

- Liver biopsies are performed in the morning.
- Do not eat or drink anything from midnight before your procedure.
- You may drink water up to two hours before your appointment.

### **During the procedure**

- The biopsy will be performed by a specialist Doctor called a Radiologist, who is trained in image-guided procedures.
- You will attend the radiology department on Level 3 at the Whittington hospital
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown
- Before the procedure, the Doctor will explain what will happen and ask you to sign a consent form. Please ask any questions you may have, as it is important that you feel informed and comfortable.
- You will lie flat on a trolley during the procedure.
- An ultrasound scanner will be used to identify the safest place to take the biopsy.
- Local anaesthetic will be injected to numb the area.
- The biopsy needle will then be inserted to take the sample. You may be asked to hold your breath briefly.
- The tissue sample will be sent to the laboratory for analysis.
- The procedure usually takes about 30 minutes.

### **After the procedure**

- You will be asked to lie on the side that the biopsy was performed (normally on the right side) for one hour.
- Sometimes the biopsy will be performed from the front, in which case you will be asked to lie on your tummy for one hour.
- Your observations will be checked regularly for a total of four hours
- Some discomfort or pain is common, and pain relief can be provided if needed.
- If everything is satisfactory, you will be discharged home the same day.

## When you get home

- Rest for the remainder of the day and do not return to work.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery on the day of the biopsy.
- You may experience pain on the right side of your abdomen or in your shoulder. This is common and usually settles within two days with regular painkillers.
- You can eat and drink normally.
- Keep the dressing dry for 24 hours.

## Risks and side effects

- A percutaneous liver biopsy is a very safe procedure.
- However, as with all medical procedures, there are some risks.
- The risk of complications is minimised by using ultrasound guidance during the procedure.

## Common side effects

- Mild pain or aching on the right side or in the right shoulder due to bruising.
- This is usually temporary and can be managed with simple pain relief.

## Rare complications (less than 1%)

- Bleeding from the biopsy site
- Puncture of the lung lining
- Injury to nearby organs.

## When to seek medical help

Please attend your nearest Accident & Emergency department if you experience:

- Chills or a high fever
- Difficulty breathing
- Heavy or persistent bleeding from the biopsy site
- Severe chest, shoulder, or abdominal pain
- Passing blood in your stool
- Increasing abdominal swelling.

## When will I receive my results?

- Once the biopsy has been examined, the results will be sent to the Doctor who referred you.
- This Doctor may:
  - Write to you and your GP
  - Discuss the results with you at your next clinic appointment.

## Contact our service

For questions about your appointment at the Imaging Department please contact us on 020 7288 5888 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm).

For any other questions, please contact the service who referred you to have this procedure.

## Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net).

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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