

Percutaneous liver biopsy

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what a **percutaneous liver biopsy** is. It outlines what happens when you come into hospital for your biopsy and the possible risks. We hope you find this leaflet helpful but you should still discuss the procedure with your doctor.

Liver biopsy is usually planned well in advance. You should have an opportunity to discuss the reason for doing it and any worries you have either with one of your own doctors or the person performing the biopsy.

Do make sure you understand what is involved before you sign the consent form. Remember that you can change your mind about having the biopsy at any time.

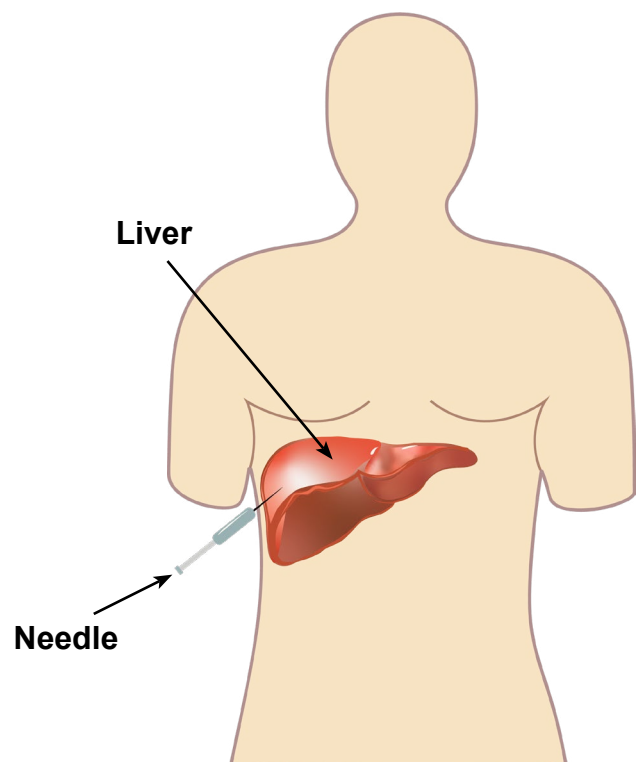
What is percutaneous liver biopsy?

Percutaneous means 'through the skin'.

A biopsy is where a small piece of tissue is taken out of the body through a small puncture site. A special needle is used to do this. The needle is put in through the skin, over the liver on the right side of your upper abdomen.

Why do I need a liver biopsy?

Scans have shown an abnormality in your liver, but it is not always possible to see the cause or degree of these abnormalities on scans alone. The simplest way to make a diagnosis is to examine a sample of liver tissue under the microscope.



Who has made this decision?

The consultant in charge of your case and the radiologist performing the biopsy will have discussed your case and feel this is the best way of making the diagnosis and planning your treatment. Your opinion will be taken into account, and if after talking to your doctors you do not wish to have the procedure, then you can decide against it.

Who will be performing my biopsy?

A specially trained doctor called a radiologist will perform your biopsy. They will use x-ray and scanning equipment to place the biopsy needle accurately into your liver.

Where will my biopsy take place?

Generally the procedure takes place in the X-ray Department, in one of the scan rooms. The x-ray staff will try to make you as comfortable as possible.

What do I need to do before my biopsy?

Before your biopsy you will have blood tests done to make sure your blood clots properly. Make sure you tell staff of any medicines you take, especially those that affect blood clotting like aspirin or blood thinners.

You will probably be asked not to eat or drink anything for a few hours before your biopsy. Your doctor will tell you whether to take your regular medications during the fasting period and may give you other special instructions.

What happens during a liver biopsy?

- In the scan room you will be asked to lie on your back on a hospital bed with your right hand above your head.
- After scanning your liver to determine the best site for the biopsy, the radiologist will clean your skin with antiseptic to avoid infection.
- Your skin and deeper tissues will be injected with local anaesthetic; this will sting briefly before the tissues go numb.
- The radiologist will make a small cut, then insert the biopsy needle to take a sample of liver tissue. Ultrasound may be used to guide the needle into the exact position for biopsy.

In some cases, when there is an increased risk of bleeding, the radiologist may place a small metal coil which looks like a spring into the needle puncture site. This causes blood to clot around it stopping any bleeding.

How long will the biopsy take?

The whole procedure takes between 15 and 20 minutes, as positioning the biopsy can take a little time. The biopsy itself takes only a few seconds.

Will it hurt?

You will feel stinging as the local anaesthetic is given and then pressure on your skin as the biopsy needle is placed. Some people also feel some discomfort as the needle enters their liver.

You may feel discomfort after the biopsy has been taken, either in your right shoulder or in your stomach. This is common and you will be offered painkillers; let the nursing staff know if the discomfort does not go away.

What happens afterwards?

After your biopsy you will be asked to stay lying flat for several hours. During this time the nursing staff will take your pulse and blood pressure regularly. All being well, you will be allowed home either on the same day or the next morning.

When will I get the results of my biopsy?

Do not expect to get the result of your biopsy before you leave hospital. It always takes a few days to do all the necessary tests on the biopsy specimen.

What are the risks and complications?

Percutaneous liver biopsy is generally a very safe procedure but some risks and complications can still arise.

- The most usual complication is **pain after the procedure**, as described above, which may take several hours to settle.
- **Bleeding** is usually minimal and does not last long.
- More **serious bleeding** can happen. It may lead to the development of a large bruise either in or around the liver or a leakage of blood into your abdomen or gut. If the bleeding is serious then a further radiological procedure or an operation may be needed.

Is there any alternative test?

There is no radiological alternative.

Finally...

Hopefully some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you.

Make sure you are satisfied that you have enough information about your procedure before you sign the consent form.

Percutaneous biopsy is a very safe procedure, designed to save you having a larger operation. There are some slight risks and possible complications involved, but these are generally minor and do not happen very often.

Further information

- **The Royal College of Radiologists**
Web: www.rcr.ac.uk
- **British Society of Interventional Radiology**
Web: www.bsir.org

References

This leaflet is produced with grateful acknowledgement to the Patients' Liaison Group of the Royal College of Radiologists.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation