

Liver Biopsy: An Overview

- **PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND ENCLOSED PREP TODAY.**
An early understanding of the requirements for a successful liver biopsy can help prevent the rescheduling and lengthy delay of your appointment.
- As with any procedure, liver biopsy can present risks. The information enclosed is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor, but is presented as a general overview of the procedure. If after reading the enclosed materials you believe you would benefit from meeting with your gastroenterologist prior to your procedure, please call us to schedule an office appointment. (Scheduling office time may require rescheduling and delaying the date of your procedure.)

Liver Biopsy by needle:

A liver biopsy is a procedure in which a small needle is inserted into the liver to collect a tissue sample. The tissue is then analyzed in a laboratory to help doctors diagnose a variety of disorders and diseases in the liver. A liver biopsy is most often performed to help identify the cause of:

- Persistent abnormal liver blood tests (liver enzymes).
- Unexplained yellowing of the skin (jaundice).
- A liver abnormality found on ultrasound, CT scan, or nuclear scan.
- Unexplained enlargement of the liver.

Preparation: When preparing for a liver biopsy, there are several things to keep in mind.

- Tell your doctor if you're pregnant, have a lung or heart condition, are allergic to any medications, or have bleeding problems.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking blood-thinning medications such as Coumadin, Plavix, or Warfarin. Your doctor may prescribe an alternate method for thinning your blood before the procedure.
- For the week before the procedure, do not take aspirin, or products containing aspirin, unless you have had a prior heart attack or stroke. Avoid anti-inflammatory medications (such as ibuprofen, Advil, or Motrin) for 48 hours before your biopsy, unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

Do not discontinue any medication without first consulting with your primary or referring doctor.

Transportation is another important factor to consider previous to the day of your procedure. If you will be sedated, you are required to have a driver who will remain with you at the facility and drive you home after your procedure. Public transportation and “drop off/pick up” is not allowed. You and your driver can expect to be at the facility for up to 5 hours.

Before the procedure your doctor may order laboratory tests, including a blood count, a platelet count, and a measurement of your blood’s ability to clot.

On the day of the procedure, you will briefly meet with your doctor prior to undergoing sedation. Your doctor will explain the biopsy procedure and answer any questions you might have. Your procedure will be performed by this gastroenterologist with the aid of nurses and a medical technician. You will wear a hospital gown and may be given a pain reliever prior to the procedure.

During the procedure, you will lie on your back, with your right elbow out to the side and your right hand under your head. It is important that you remain as still as possible during the procedure.

An ultrasound may be used to mark the location of your liver. The doctor cleans and numbs an area on your upper abdomen with a local anesthetic (pain-relieving medication). The doctor then makes a small incision on your upper abdomen and inserts a needle into this incision to take a small sample of liver tissue for analysis. The procedure takes approximately 5 minutes.

After the procedure you will stay in a recovery room for up to 4 hours for observation. You may feel minor discomfort or a dull pain in your shoulders or back. Do not drive or operate machinery for at least eight hours after the procedure. Avoid taking aspirin or products containing aspirin, or anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, Advil, or Motrin for one week after the procedure. You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) if needed. Do not perform vigorous physical activity for at least 24 hours after the biopsy. Your doctor will discuss the biopsy results with you several days after the procedure.

Risks:

In most instances, there are no complications in obtaining a liver biopsy. However, internal bleeding may occur, or a leak of bile from the liver or gallbladder, or a puncture of the lung or other internal organs.