



University Hospitals Bristol  
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service  
Radiology

# Liver biopsy under ultrasound



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# **Liver biopsy under ultrasound**

An abnormality has been found in your liver. In order to decide on your treatment, your doctor needs to know exactly what the diagnosis is and has asked a radiologist to perform a liver biopsy.

Liver biopsy is now the most widely used procedure to investigate liver disease.

This leaflet explains what this procedure involves. Please read it before attending the department for your liver biopsy.

## **What is a biopsy?**

A biopsy is the name given to the procedure where a needle is placed into the liver and a small number of cells are obtained for diagnosis. The biopsy is performed using ultrasound to guide the needle into position.

## **Before your biopsy**

Before your biopsy you will have a blood test to see if you have any clotting problems.

## **On the day of the biopsy**

You can have a light breakfast before 7am on the day of the procedure.

# Ultrasound scan

You will be awake during the procedure.

You will have to lie on your back while the scan is performed. The skin will be cleaned and a local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin. This can sting a little, but once the local anaesthetic has been used you will feel nothing. A needle is inserted into the liver and cells can be obtained.

You will be given instructions on holding your breath at times during the procedure.

Afterwards, you will be asked to lie on your right side and you will be transferred to a ward. Your pulse and blood pressure will be monitored at intervals for several hours to check for any complications that may arise.

## How long does it take?

The procedure takes up to 30 minutes. Following the procedure you will then be cared for on the ward for up to six hours.

## Does it hurt?

Injecting the local anaesthetic can sting.

During the procedure you may feel a drawing feeling across your upper abdomen.

Afterwards you may feel a slight ache on your right side and in your right shoulder.

# What are the complications?

## Minor complications

Pain is the most common complication, which may require analgesia (painkillers). Pain occurs in up to one third of patients, with severe pain occurring in one in 100.

There is a small risk of some internal bleeding after removing a small part of your liver.

Some patients experience fainting or a drop in blood pressure. This occurs in about one in 30 patients.

## Serious complications

Serious complications are rare but do occur.

Some liver diseases cause increased risk of bleeding and clotting abnormalities. These are detected by the pre-biopsy blood test.

The main cause is due to major bleeding. This occurs in one in 250 patients.

The reported death rate as a consequence of major bleeding occurs in one in 1,000 patients.

## How can I get home?

After your recovery period on the ward, you should arrange for a responsible person to take you home and stay with you for the next 24 hours. You should rest for the next 24 hours and avoid lifting for 48 hours.

## What are the alternatives?

In order to obtain the sample or liver tissue, the only real alternative is an operation.

## How do I get the results?

The doctor who referred you to us will receive the report. You will get the result at your next clinic appointment. If you do not receive an appointment, you should contact the consultant's secretary.

**If you have any questions,  
please telephone:**

**Professor M Callaway,  
Consultant radiologist**

**on 0117 342 9379.**

## Car parking

The car park provided for Bristol Royal Infirmary patients is small and you may have difficulty parking. There are several NCP car parks within walking distance of the hospital.

The Trust operates a hospital free bus, which travels a circuit between the various hospitals of University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, the bus station, and NCP car parks.

You can ask for a copy of the leaflet 'How to get to our hospitals' for further details on travelling to our hospitals. The latest information can also be accessed on the following page of our website: [www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/travelling-to-and-from-our-hospitals/](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/travelling-to-and-from-our-hospitals/)

## Notes and queries

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit:  
**[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation)**  
or call the research and innovation team on  
**0117 342 0233.**

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

**[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/)**

**Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000**



**Minicom: 0117 934 9869**



**[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk)**



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email [patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk](mailto:patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk).



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