

# Liver Biopsy

The liver is a large organ in the upper right side of the abdomen. A liver biopsy is a procedure in which a tissue sample is taken from the liver and examined under a microscope.

There are three types of liver biopsies:

- Percutaneous. A needle is used to remove a sample through an incision in your abdomen.
- Laparoscopic. Several incisions are made in the abdomen. A sample is removed with the help of a tiny camera.
- Transjugular. An incision is made in your neck in the area of the jugular vein. A sample is removed through a small flexible tube that is passed down the blood vessel and into your liver.

## Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthetic medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

## What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems can occur and include:

- Bleeding.
- Infection.
- Bruising.
- Pain.
- Injury to nearby organs or tissues, such as nerves, gallbladder, liver, or lungs.

## What happens before the procedure?

### Eating and drinking restrictions

- You may be asked not to drink or eat for 6–8 hours before the liver biopsy. You may be allowed to eat a light breakfast. Talk to your health care provider about when you should stop eating and drinking.

### Medicines

Ask your health care provider about:

- Changing or stopping your regular medicines. This is especially important if you are taking diabetes medicines or blood thinners.
- Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines unless your health care provider tells you to take them.

- Taking over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.

### **General instructions**

- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco, such as cigarettes and e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic.
- Plan to have a responsible adult care for you for at least 24 hours after you leave the hospital or clinic. This is important.
- You may have blood or urine tests.
- Ask your health care provider what steps will be taken to prevent infection. These may include:
  - Removing hair at the surgery site.
  - Washing skin with a germ-killing soap.
  - Taking antibiotic medicine.

### **What happens during the procedure?**

- An IV will be inserted into one of your veins.
  - You will be given one or more of the following:
    - A medicine to help you relax (*sedative*).
    - A medicine to numb the area (*local anesthetic*).
    - A medicine to make you fall asleep (*general anesthetic*).
- Your health care provider will use one of the following procedures to remove samples from your liver. These procedures may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

### **Percutaneous liver biopsy**

- You will lie on your back, with your right hand over your head.
- A health care provider will locate your liver by tapping and pressing on the right side of your abdomen, or by using an ultrasound or CT scan.
- A local anesthetic will be used to numb an area at the bottom of your last right rib.
- A small incision will be made in the numbed area.
- A biopsy needle will be inserted into the incision.
- Several samples of liver tissue will be taken. You will be asked to hold your breath as each sample is taken.
- The incision will be closed with stitches (*sutures*).
- A bandage (*dressing*) may be placed over the incision.
- The incision will be closed with stitches (*sutures*).
- A bandage (*dressing*) may be placed over the incision.

### **What happens after the procedure?**

- Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until you leave the hospital or clinic.
- You will be asked to rest quietly for 2–4 hours or longer.
- You will be closely monitored for bleeding from the biopsy site.
- You may be allowed to go home when the medicines have worn off and you can walk, drink, eat, and use the bathroom.

### **Summary**

- A liver biopsy is a procedure in which a tissue sample is taken from the liver and examined under a microscope.
- This is a safe procedure, but problems can occur, including bleeding, infection, pain, or injury to nearby organs or tissues.
- Ask your health care provider about changing or stopping your regular medicines.
- Plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic and to be with you for 24 hours after the procedure.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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