



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust

Department of Radiology

Transjugular Liver Biopsy

Patient Information

What is a transjugular liver biopsy and why do I need it?

A liver biopsy involves taking a small sample of tissue from the liver to be examined under a microscope. It is used to diagnose and monitor certain liver conditions.

Without a biopsy there may not be enough information to make a diagnosis and your treatment may be affected.

The procedure is carried out by a Radiologist under X-ray guidance in the Department of Radiology, normally as a day case.

Traditionally a liver biopsy is performed by inserting a needle through the skin directly into the liver. However in your case it is safer to use the jugular vein in the neck as you may have either abnormal clotting factors or a collection of fluid in your abdomen.

The procedure takes approximately one hour.

Benefits

A liver biopsy can be taken when it would be unsafe to perform a traditional biopsy through the abdominal wall due to fluid around the liver or problems with blood clotting.

Risks

Complications are infrequent; the main three are outlined below:

- Bleeding from the point where the biopsy is taken or from the neck at the site of the puncture into the vein
- Infection
- Injury to the liver causing significant internal bleeding.

Preparation

If you take medication to thin the blood, please contact your Consultant as this medication must be stopped for a specific length of time before the procedure. It is advisable to bring all your medications with you.

Please arrange for a friend or relative to collect you following the procedure. It is essential that a responsible adult remains with you for the next 24 hours. If this cannot be arranged please inform your referring Consultant's secretary who will organise an overnight bed for you.

Fasting

You must not eat for six hours before the procedure; however you may drink clear fluids such as water until two hours before.

Within 2 hours of the procedure prescribed medications, especially pre-medication can be taken with a small drink of water (30ml).

If you are a diabetic and need advice about fasting, please contact the hospital's Diabetic Advice team prior to admission on (028) 9056 1426.

Admission

During admission you will be asked about your medical history. You will be asked to change into a gown before transfer to the Department of Radiology. A small plastic port (cannula) will be placed in a vein in your arm and blood samples will be taken.

If your blood clotting factors are not within the normal range you will need transfusions before the procedure.

Procedure

You will meet a number of staff who will look after you during the procedure. You must have a clear understanding of what the procedure involves including the risks and benefits. If you have not already done so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and the Radiologist will answer any questions you may have.

Following transfer to the X-ray table you will be required to lie on your back. The nurse will attach monitoring equipment to you. The right side of your neck will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and then numbed with a local anaesthetic.

The Radiologist will then place a catheter (a hollow, narrow tube) into the vein and through the tube a biopsy needle will be inserted. The needle will be directed to the liver and a small sample of liver tissue will be removed. Contrast media (a special dye which shows up in X-ray) may be used to assist during the procedure.

On completion the Radiologist will remove the tube and press on your neck for a few minutes to stop any bleeding.

Recovery

You will be transferred into bed and returned to the ward where you will be monitored by nursing staff. You should be able to return to work the day following the procedure unless you are advised otherwise. You can resume normal activities but should avoid lifting or strenuous exercise for 48 hours.

Results

The results of your transjugular liver biopsy will take approximately one week and will be forwarded to your consultant who will contact you directly.

Contact details

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