

What Is A Liver Biopsy?

A biopsy is a sampling of cells or tissue from a suspicious mass. Guided by ultrasound, the radiologist will insert a small needle into your liver to remove a sample of cells. These cells will then be examined under a microscope in the pathology department. Results may take 7-10 days for analysis.

Why Do I Need a Liver Biopsy?

Liver biopsies are usually done to detect the presence of abnormal cells in the liver, like cancer cells, or to evaluate a disease processes such as cirrhosis. Your doctor may order this test if blood or imaging tests indicate there are problems with your liver.

How Is The Procedure Done?

Before:

Your doctor will arrange for bloodwork prior to the procedure. Your doctor will also ask you to **stop any blood thinners** you take. Talk to your doctor about which medications need to be stopped prior to the procedure, for how long, and when you can safely start them again. You may eat or drink before the procedure. You may take your usual medications prior to the procedure.

You will need someone to drive you home after the procedure.

During:

Imaging-guided, minimally invasive procedures, such as needle biopsies, are most often performed by a specially trained radiologist, an interventional radiologist with the use of ultrasound or CT. A local anesthetic (freezing) will be injected into the skin to numb the path of the needle.

In a core needle biopsy, the automated mechanism is activated, moving the needle forward and filling the needle trough, or shallow receptacle, with 'cores' of tissue. The outer sheath instantly moves forward to cut the tissue and keep it in the trough. This process may be repeated several times. The samples (cores) are then sent to be analyzed by a Pathologist. Image guided needle biopsy is a reliable method of obtaining tissue samples that can help diagnose whether a nodule is benign (non-cancerous) or malignant.

After:

- Rest for the remainder of the day following your procedure.
- Have a responsible adult spend the night following your procedure.
- Do not drive for 24 hours following your procedure.
- Do not lift anything weighing over 5 kilograms (10 pounds) for 48 hours following your procedure.
- Do not participate in sports or strenuous activity for 48 hours following your procedure

Diet

- You can eat what you normally eat.

Medications

- If you need anything for pain or discomfort, take Tylenol (acetaminophen) for the next 48 hours. Follow the directions on the label.
- **Do not** use Aspirin or ibuprofen products, such as Advil or Motrin, as it may increase the risk of bleeding.
- Resume your usual medications unless instructed differently.

Dressing Care/Sutures

- Remove the gauze dressing the day after your procedure.

Bathing

- You may shower the day after your procedure.
- **Do not** bathe or swim (especially in lakes) for one week, as this may lead to an infection.

What To Watch For:

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| ▪ Severe pain at biopsy site | ▪ Fever (more than 100°F / 38°C) |
| ▪ Chills | ▪ Excessive bleeding and/or bloody dressing |
| ▪ Feeling unusually faint or light headed | ▪ Trouble breathing or shortness of breath |
| ▪ Increasing abdominal pain | ▪ Redness, excessive swelling, or discharge from biopsy site |

If you experience any of the above problems then call your doctor, Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), or go to your nearest Emergency Department. Take this sheet with you.

Notes:

Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition.