

frequently asked

about Liver Biopsy

Q What is a liver biopsy ?

answer

Liver biopsy is a medical procedure in which a doctor uses a special needle to remove a small piece of tissue from your liver to check for signs of damage. A liver biopsy will help you and your doctor find out more about the health of your liver.

This is important if you have hepatitis C or another liver disease and you are trying to decide about treatment. A liver biopsy also can be helpful if your doctor is not sure what is causing your liver problem. Not everyone, however, will need a liver biopsy.

Q What happens during a liver biopsy ?

answer

A liver biopsy is a medical procedure done in a hospital. You will need to lie flat on your back during the procedure. First, the doctor will find the space between your ribs on your right side where a liver biopsy can be performed most safely.

Then, the doctor will clean the skin above this location and give you an injection (or shot) of local anesthetic to numb the area. After the area

is numb, the doctor will insert a biopsy needle to take out a small piece of liver. This part of the procedure is done quickly.

Most people who have a liver biopsy say that it only hurts a little. One generally feels a sting when the doctor administers the shot of anesthetic. Many people also have a feeling of pressure when the doctor inserts the biopsy needle. Some people say that they feel this pressure in their right shoulder, as well.

Q What happens after a liver biopsy ?

answer

After the biopsy is done, your doctor will ask you to roll onto your side and lie still for 1 or 2 hours. This is to put pressure on the area where the biopsy was performed, so that you do not have bleeding or other problems caused by getting up too soon. After a while, your doctor may order blood tests to make sure that you are not bleeding. Before long, you will be told that you can go home. Follow your doctor's advice not to lift heavy weights or exercise too hard for about 2 weeks, so that your body has enough time to heal.



HEPATITIS C
SUPPORT PROJECT

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Q What are the risks from a liver biopsy?

answer

A liver biopsy generally is very safe. But, as is true for any medical procedure, there are some risks. These risks include:

- pain at the site of the biopsy
- bleeding from the liver
- puncturing of other organs, if something goes wrong when the needle is inserted
- very rarely, death (1 in 10,000 cases)

You should not have a liver biopsy if you have used aspirin or another blood-thinning medicine

the week before your procedure. You should not take these medicines in the week after your biopsy either. Make sure that you tell your doctor about all the medicines you have been taking or that you plan to take. You also should not have a liver biopsy if your doctor thinks that your liver disease has progressed to the point that your blood does not clot normally.

This HCSP FAQ is also available in the following foreign languages:

- Chinese
- Hmong
- Somali
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

<http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/international.asp>

• Hep C FAQ sheet •

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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