

### ■ WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE BIOPSY?

On your return to the ward the nurses will check your blood pressure and pulse frequently. Some mild soreness in the area of the biopsy is normal after the local anaesthetic wears off. Irritation of the muscle that lies over the liver can also cause mild discomfort in the right shoulder for some patients. If you have any soreness, ask the nurse for pain relief.

- You will be allowed to eat and drink after 2 hours.
- After 6 hours you will be allowed get out of bed.
- The following morning you will be allowed go home.
- You will be given an appointment for the outpatient clinic for 2 to 3 week's time where you will be given the results of your liver biopsy.

### ■ WHAT ADVICE SHOULD I FOLLOW AFTER I GO HOME?

It is recommended that you avoid strenuous work or exercise for the next 3 days.

Paracetamol can be taken for any soreness over the next day or two (no more than 1 gram every eight hours).

The bandage can be removed in 2 to 3 days or before it gets wet.

If you experience any unusual or severe pain, shortness of breath or other problems, contact your GP or the Liver Unit in this hospital.

St Vincent's  
University  
Hospital

Information Leaflet



## LIVER BIOPSY

### Contact Telephone Numbers:

Liver Unit  
St Vincent's University Hospital  
Elm Park  
Dublin 4

Telephone: 01 2094713

Email: [liverc@st-vincents.ie](mailto:liverc@st-vincents.ie)

### ■ WHAT IS A LIVER BIOPSY?

A liver biopsy is a medical procedure performed to obtain a small sample of your liver. The sample is sent to a laboratory to be examined by a pathologist (a doctor who specialises in examining the effects of disease on body tissues).

The procedure involves an overnight stay in hospital.

### ■ WHAT ARE THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH A LIVER BIOPSY?

A liver biopsy is generally very safe. But, as with any medical procedure, there can be some risks. These include: pain at the biopsy site (pain occurs in 1/3 of patients, it can last for a few hours and may be relieved by tablets or an injection if necessary); bleeding from the liver; bile leak from the liver or gall bladder; puncture of other organs; very rarely, death (1 in 10,000 cases). These complications are rare and can be treated by blood transfusion or other interventions without the need for surgery.

### ■ WHY DO I NEED TO HAVE A LIVER BIOPSY?

A liver biopsy will help you and your doctor find out more about the health of your liver. This is important if you are trying to decide about treatment. Blood tests and a medical examination can indicate that something is wrong with your liver. Often it is difficult to say precisely what is wrong and how severe the disease process may be without doing a liver biopsy.

### ■ HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN TO COME INTO HOSPITAL?

Your doctor has placed you on a waiting list. The ward secretary will send you a letter or telephone you the week before your biopsy to advise you when to come into hospital. Due to pressure on beds you may

receive only one or two days notice by telephone.

When the day arrives you can go directly to the ward. Have nothing to eat or drink that morning, as it is necessary for you to fast for the procedure and for 2 hours afterwards. You should only bring what you need for one night in hospital. Do not bring valuables, jewellery or large sums of money with you.

If you are on any medication such as Warfarin, Aspirin, Plavix (Clopidogrel) or herbal medication that may affect your blood clotting these must be stopped at least a week before the biopsy. It is therefore very important to tell your doctor what medication you are taking when he places you on the biopsy waiting list.

**If you cannot attend for your biopsy on the day please inform us so we can use the bed for another patient. Your name will go back on the waiting list.**

### ■ WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I COME INTO THE WARD?

You will be admitted by a nurse and have a blood test taken to determine your blood clotting ability and blood count. The doctor will also see you, explain the procedure again, answer any questions you may have and ask you to sign a consent form. You may have an intravenous cannula (drip) placed in your hand by the doctor on the ward or when you are in the X-Ray department. This will be used to give you sedation just before the biopsy.

The nurse will give you a hospital gown to wear during the procedure. This is to avoid staining your own clothes with the antiseptic fluid used to clean your skin. You should use the bathroom before you go for the procedure, as you will have to remain in bed for up to six hours afterwards.

### ■ HOW IS THE BIOPSY DONE?

The procedure is done in the X-Ray department. A porter will take you there in your bed.

A blood pressure cuff and finger clip will monitor your blood pressure and oxygen level. You may have some oxygen given to you through two little tubes in your nostrils.

You will be asked to lie on your back with your right arm behind your head. This exposes your right side where the liver is located under your ribs. The doctor will put some gel on your side and use an ultrasound sensor to locate your liver.

To help you relax you will be given some sedation through the cannula (drip) in your hand. This will make you feel drowsy but you will not be completely asleep, as you will be asked to hold your breath for a couple of seconds during the biopsy.

The area will be cleaned with antiseptic fluid. Local anaesthetic will be injected into your skin with a small needle to numb the skin and tissues over the liver. This is similar to the local anaesthetic you would receive at the dentist. This stings for just a second or two. After the area is numb the liver biopsy needle will be inserted and a small piece of your liver will be removed very quickly.

You will be asked to hold your breath while the biopsy is being taken. It is important to stay still as movement can cause injury. Most people report discomfort in their right side and shoulder at this time. This only lasts a few minutes.

A small bandage will be placed on the site and you will be asked to lie on your right side for the next 2 hours and to remain in bed for 4 hours after that. This is to prevent bleeding or other problems caused by getting up too soon. You will then be brought back to the ward in your bed.