

FACTSHEET

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Liver biopsy

What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy involves inserting a needle into your child's right upper abdomen to obtain a small piece of your child's liver to be tested in Pathology. This procedure may be performed on a specialised medical ward, in the radiology department or operating theatres under sedation or a general anaesthetic.

Why would my child need a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is a procedure that will be performed on your child to determine whether there is any underlying liver disease or damage, and also what might be causing it. Your doctor will explain the exact reason for doing the biopsy.

How is it done?

Prior

- Your child will need to have recent blood test results available. These bloods will often be taken the day of biopsy to ensure your child is in the best health for this procedure.
- A cannula will be inserted to ensure intravenous access is available if intravenous fluids or pain relief is required.
- Your child may require an ultrasound scan to mark the skin for the correct place the biopsy will be performed. An oral premedication is sometimes given to your child shortly before the procedure to assist with sedation. Your child is required to remain in bed after this medication.
- Your child will need to have fasted from food/drink for 4-6 hours prior to the procedure as sedation or anaesthesia will be required to perform the biopsy.

During

- Sedation or anaesthesia will be administered during the biopsy. Your child will be monitored throughout the procedure.
- A special needle is used to remove the liver tissue through a tiny incision in the skin.

Post

- Your child will return to their bed space with a sandbag or pressure bandage over the biopsy site to add pressure and minimise bleeding. They will be encouraged to lie on their right side.
- Observations including heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure will be taken frequently to monitor your child closely. Your child is encouraged to rest in bed for 6 hours after the biopsy and until review by medical staff.
- Your child may have something to drink when they are awake and have been reviewed.
- Children are kept overnight in hospital after the liver biopsy to monitor for potential complications, and are discharged the next morning if well.

The biopsy dressing must remain intact for 24 hours post biopsy. Please let nursing staff know if you have any concerns with your child so that appropriate care can be given.

Are there any risks involved?

As with any procedure there are risks involved. Complications from the liver biopsy are uncommon. Some serious but rare complications are bleeding, infection and puncture of the lung or gallbladder/bile tubes. Pain at either the biopsy site or in the right shoulder is more common, and your child will be given pain medication as needed and assessed regularly.