

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 get a small piece of your child's liver to be tested in Pathology. This procedure may be done on a specialised medical ward, in the radiology department or in an operating theatre under sedation or a general anaesthetic.

Why would my child need a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is a procedure that will be done to help determine whether your child has any underlying liver disease or damage. It is also used to find out what might be causing the damage. Your doctor will explain the exact reason for doing the biopsy.

How is it done?

Before the procedure

- Your child will need to have fasted from food/drink for 4-6 hours before the procedure. This is because sedation or anaesthesia will be needed for the biopsy.
- Your child will need to have recent blood test results available. These bloods will often be taken on the day of biopsy to make sure your child is in the best health for this procedure.
- A cannula will be inserted to make sure intravenous access is available if intravenous fluids or pain relief is needed.
- Your child may need 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 just before the procedure to help the sedation. Your child will have to stay in bed after this medication.

During the procedure

- Sedation or anaesthesia will be given to your child 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.

After the procedure

- Your child will return to their bed space with a sandbag or pressure bandage over the biopsy site to add pressure and minimise bleeding. Your child will be encouraged to lie on their right side.
- Your child's heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure will be checked often. Your child will need 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 a liver biopsy to monitor for potential complications. They will then be discharged the next morning if well.

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

Are there any risks involved?

Like any procedure, there are risks involved. Complications from the liver biopsy are not common. 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 then be assessed regularly.