



## Liver Biopsy

In a liver biopsy, the physician examines a small piece of tissue from your liver for signs of damage or disease. A special needle is used to remove the tissue from the liver. The physician decides to do a liver biopsy after tests suggest that the liver does not work properly. For example, a blood test might show that your blood contains higher than normal levels of liver enzymes or too much iron or copper. An x ray could suggest that the liver is swollen. Looking at liver tissue itself is the best way to determine whether the liver is healthy or what is causing it to be damaged.

### Preparation

Be sure to mention any medications you take, especially those that affect blood clotting, like blood thinners. One week before the procedure, you will have to stop taking aspirin, ibuprofen, and anticoagulants. You must not eat or drink anything for 8 hours before the biopsy, and you should plan to arrive at the hospital about an hour before the scheduled time of the procedure. Your physician will tell you whether to take your regular medications during the fasting period and may give you other special instructions.

### Procedure

Liver biopsy is considered minor surgery, so it is done at the hospital. For the biopsy, you will lie on a hospital bed on your back with your right hand above your head. After marking the outline of your liver and injecting a local anesthetic to numb the area, the physician will make a small incision in your right side near your rib cage, then insert the biopsy needle and retrieve a sample of liver tissue. The physician will ask you to hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds while he or she puts the needle in your liver. You may feel pressure and a dull pain. The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes.