

What is a Liver Biopsy?

A Liver Biopsy is a procedure that is performed under general anaesthetic in the operating theatre under ultrasound guidance. It involves inserting a needle into your child's abdomen to obtain a small sample of liver tissue. This sample will be examined in order to assist with your child's diagnosis and treatment.

Why does my child need a Liver Biopsy?

A liver biopsy is performed to help diagnose specific types and stages of liver disease in conjunction with blood tests and scans. A liver biopsy may also indicate any liver damage. It is very helpful for the medical team to make decisions about treatment options for your child.

What does a Liver Biopsy involve?

The procedure is performed by an interventional radiologist. One parent may accompany your child to theatre and stay with him/her until he/she is asleep but can not stay while the liver biopsy is being performed. The procedure itself is very short. Once your child is asleep, the interventional radiologist will use ultrasound guidance to assist them to collect a small amount of liver tissue. The wound site is very small and does not require any stitches. Your child will return to the ward with a padded pressure dressing.

What are the risks associated with Liver Biopsy?

Liver Biopsy is generally a safe procedure. You will have an opportunity to discuss any possible risks with your doctor when you are in clinic or when you are admitted for a procedure.

The medical and nursing teams prior to the procedure will carefully assess your child. As the liver contains a lot of blood, bleeding is a possible risk. However this does not occur often. To help prevent the risk of bleeding the medical team will perform blood tests on your child. If there are any abnormalities, additional medication may be required before the liver biopsy. Your child will also remain in hospital over night so he/she can be monitored closely for any signs of bleeding.

Your child may feel sore after the biopsy but the nursing staff will manage this very effectively with pain-relieving medication. Please ask your nurse if you are concerned.

How does my child prepare for a Liver Biopsy

Your child will be admitted the day before the procedure. Preparation for the biopsy will include blood tests and the insertion of an intravenous line. Because your child will be having a general anaesthetic he/she will have to fast for a number of hours prior to the procedure. If you feel your child is very anxious, please discuss this with the nursing staff as a medication to help him/her relax may be prescribed.

In some cases, your child's medications may be adjusted or additional medications may be given. This will be explained by your nurse/doctor

If your child is taking medications, which affect blood clotting e.g aspirin, warfarin, Tinzaparin, ibuprofen these will need to be discontinued at least 3-5 days prior to the procedure.

Please contact your Liver Nurse Specialist or contact GI team directly for further direction. All other medications are to be taken as usual.

What will happen when my child returns to the ward?

Initially: Your child may be sleepy or agitated until the anaesthetic wears off. If he/she feels sick, an anti-sickness medication can be given. Your child will be monitored closely to detect any possible complications. This includes measurements of their blood pressure, heart rate and breathing. These observations will be very frequent to begin with (every 5 minutes) and then further apart as your child recovers (every 15minutes-4hourly).

Pain: your child may feel sore and pain relief will be given in theatre and on the ward. Please ask your nurse if you are concerned.

Rest: your child should remain in bed for at least 3 hours after the biopsy if possible. This is to help prevent bleeding. This can be difficult to maintain in young children so it is advised that you bring your child's favourite, toys, books to help keep him/her occupied. Older children may be allowed to mobilise to the bathroom under nurse supervision after 3 hours.

Diet: Usually children can drink 1-2 hours after the procedure. Your child may have a light snack 4 hours after their return to the ward and then return to their normal diet after 6 hours. Infants may be allowed to feed sooner; your child's medical team will direct this.

Dressing: a pressure dressing will be on your child's tummy, it is important that this is not removed or pulled at. Your nurse will observe this dressing frequently.