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UnityPoint Health - Allen Hospital
Digestive Health Center

CedarValleyGI.com

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Liver Biopsy

What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is a procedure in which your health care provider removes a sample of liver tissue for examination under a microscope.

When is it used?

This procedure is used to test for liver diseases such as cirrhosis, hepatitis, and tumors. It is also used to check the progress of treatment in diseases such as chronic hepatitis.

How do I prepare for a liver biopsy?

Plan for your care and recovery after the procedure. Allow for time to rest and find other people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow any instructions your health care provider gives you. Your provider may want you to stop taking any medicine that may interfere with blood-clotting, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, before the biopsy.

You will also need to find someone to drive you the day of your procedure, due to the intravenous sedation that you will receive.

What happens during the procedure?

A liver biopsy is done using local anesthesia. The local anesthetic numbs the area around the lower ribs on the right side of the body. You will also receive intravenous sedation during the procedure.

While you lie down and hold your breath, your provider makes a small cut and inserts a thin needle into your liver. A sample of liver tissue is removed and examined under a microscope in a lab.

Sometimes the procedure is done during a CT or ultrasound scan. It might also be done during abdominal surgery under general anesthesia.

What happens after the procedure?

After the biopsy, you will need to lie on your right side for up to 2 hours unless pain develops then 4 hours. Your blood pressure, pulse, and breathing are monitored to watch for bleeding complications.

Ask your healthcare provider what steps you should take and when you should come back for a checkup.

Over

What are the benefits of this procedure?

This procedure helps your provider diagnose and evaluate your treatment options.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- There may be some minor discomfort; however with the sedation and local anesthetic, it should be minimal.
- You may have internal bleeding from the biopsy.
- The area where the needle was inserted might become infected.
- You should ask your provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You develop a fever greater than 100F
- You have any change or worsening of pain or symptoms.
- There is any unusual drainage from the biopsy area (including bloody drainage).

Call your provider during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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