

Preparing for a liver biopsy



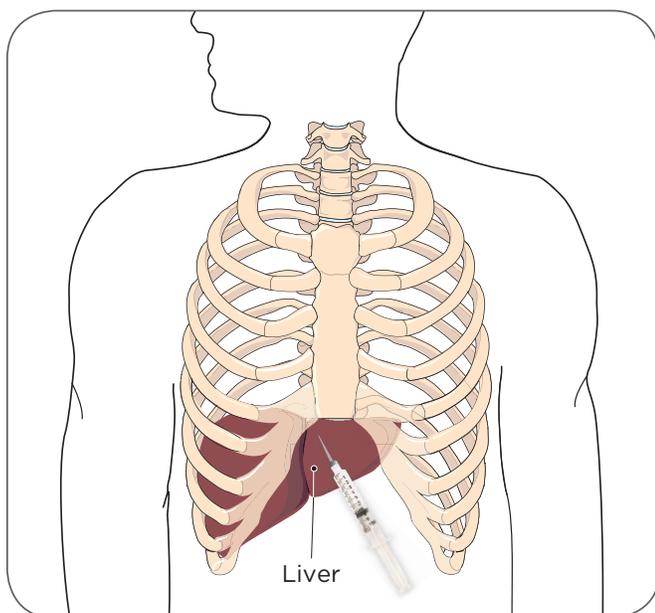
Your doctor has asked you to have a liver exam. This fact sheet explains its purpose and how to prepare for it. It also tells you what precautions to take after the exam.

What is a liver biopsy?

A biopsy consists of collecting a small piece of liver using a special needle. This piece is then analyzed in the laboratory.

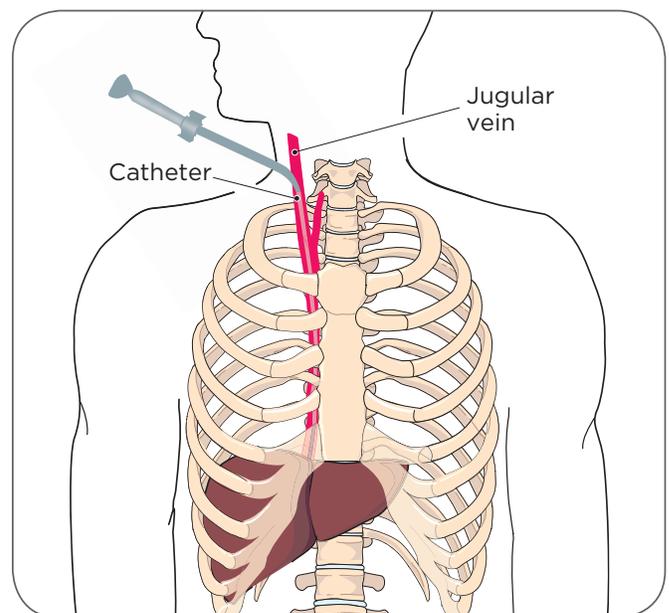
There are two ways a biopsy can be done

Transthoracic biopsy



A special needle is inserted into the liver, below the ribs.

Transjugular biopsy



A slim tube (catheter) is inserted into a neck vein, called the jugular. This tube is then pushed all the way to the liver through the blood vessels.

Why does my doctor want me to have this exam?

In general, the doctor will use the biopsy results to:

- determine what problem is affecting your liver (diagnosis)
- decide on a treatment
- monitor your liver condition and how it's changing over time

How should I prepare?

Read the following instructions carefully.

Medical tests

- > **A few days or weeks before the biopsy.** You'll have blood tests. They will help the health care team to know whether you're at risk of bleeding during the biopsy.
- > **The morning of the biopsy.** You'll have an exam to look at your liver using an ultrasound device. This just involves placing a probe on the skin.

Based on the results of these tests, your healthcare team will decide which biopsy method to use: transthoracic or transjugular.

Medications

Some medications may increase the risk of bleeding during biopsy. Because of this, it's important to stop taking them for a certain time beforehand.



Your doctor will tell you **which ones to stop and when to stop**, for your specific case. Normally, you can start taking them again 24 hours after the biopsy.

As a reminder, here are the main medications that should not be taken:

- > for **7 to 10 days BEFORE** the biopsy:
 - anti-inflammatories (Motrin, Advil, Celebrex, Naprosyn, etc.)
 - blood thinners (Coumadin, Plavix, etc.)
- > for **24 hours BEFORE** the biopsy:
 - low molecular weight heparins (e.g. Lovenox, Fragmin, Innohep)



Follow your doctor's instructions.

If you have diabetes, your healthcare team will need to carefully monitor your blood sugar on the day of the biopsy. Make sure your doctor knows you have this disease.

Eating

You need to be FASTING for 6 hours before the exam, i.e., you must not eat anything or drink any liquids, not even water. If you need to take a medication, you can do it with a little water.



You will need to arrange for someone to accompany you on your return home.

What is involved in this exam?

This exam is done under local anaesthesia, i.e., the area where the injection is made is "frozen".

The biopsy takes:

- 10 to 15 minutes, for the transthoracic method
- around 30 minutes, for the transjugular method

Throughout the examination, the team will ensure your comfort. They will explain the steps, and if you have any questions, you can ask them.

What happens after a biopsy?

Once the biopsy is done, you will stay in the hospital for about 4 hours. The health care team will monitor your condition. Follow the instructions below.

For a transthoracic biopsy

- You can eat and drink as soon as you leave the exam room.
- You must stay in bed. You can lie down in any position you wish.
- If you have any pain, tell the nurse. The nurse will give you some medicine for pain relief. Pain is most often felt at the site of the injection, in the right shoulder or in the abdomen. It is due to a slight irritation of the membrane surrounding the liver.

For a transjugular biopsy

- You can eat and drink as soon as you leave the exam room.
- You must stay in bed. The head of the bed should be raised to 30 or 45 degrees to prevent blood from accumulating where the small piece of liver was collected.
- If you have any pain, tell the nurse. The nurse will give you some medicine for pain relief.

Your doctor will come to see you before you leave to make sure everything is fine and to plan your return home. If you have any questions, you can ask him.

Can there be any complications?

It's very rare that a biopsy causes complications. Your healthcare team will be especially careful to prevent any bleeding. Bleeding is very uncommon.

If you have any questions or concerns, discuss them with your doctor.

When will I have the results?

After the biopsy, the liver sample is analyzed in the laboratory. Your doctor will give you the results at your next appointment.

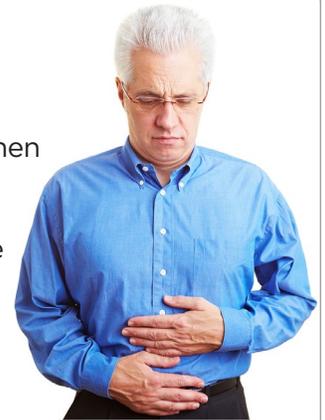
Are there any precautions I need to take when I return home?

As soon as you return home, you can resume your daily activities. However, during the 2 days (48 hours) following the biopsy, don't do any strenuous activity or sports.

The area of the liver where the biopsy was done will be sensitive for a few days. This is normal.

Go to the hospital emergency room if:

- you have pain in your abdomen
- you are excessively tired
- your face becomes very pale
- you feel nauseous or feel like vomiting



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal chumontreal.qc.ca



Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.





Observations - Comments

Write down observations you feel are important: your symptoms, treatments, follow-up, energy level, spirit, etc.





Medication

Write down anything you need to remember about your medication: what time to take your pills, effects you feel, changes of dosage, etc.



