Liver Biopsy Aftercare

You have had a liver biopsy performed today. This is a routine procedure, which is done as a day case. Rarely problems occur, and monitoring your blood pressure pulse and wound site, will give the nursing staff any sign of any problems. Bleeding can sometimes happen, as can a leak of bile from the liver or gallbladder.

Very rarely these complications may cause you to need surgery. The biopsy site may feel uncomfortable for a day or two after the biopsy. You may wish to take painkillers for this in normal doses of up to two paracetamol tablets every six hours. We advise you to not undertake any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for at least 48 hours. This is to allow your liver to heal. Please make sure that the dressing over your biopsy site remains in place for 24 hours, to prevent any infection. After the 24 hours you can bathe as normal, and change your dressing with the spare dressing provided.

If you experience any of the symptoms below:

1. Feeling faint or dizzy, especially on standing.
2. Severe pain around the site of the biopsy or elsewhere in the chest or abdomen.
3. Any unusual symptoms.

Or if you have any queries or problems regarding your biopsy:

Please contact

Gastroenterology Unit on 0151 706 2726/2725 between the hours 9.00 am to 5.00 p.m. or outside hours please call hospital switchboard 0151 706 2000 and ask to speak to the Gastroenterology doctor on call.
Alternatively, you may come directly to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Liverpool Hospital where you will be seen immediately. Please bring this letter with you.

Discharging Nurse…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

To: Accident and Emergency Department

This patient is experiencing symptoms after a liver biopsy. Please contact urgently through the hospital switchboard the Gastroenterology Specialist Registrar on-call for the Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen University Hospitals.
Day Case

Your doctor has referred you to have a day case liver biopsy performed. A biopsy is a tiny sample of body tissue, in this case liver tissue. The tissue is viewed under a microscope. This usually helps the doctor to make an exact diagnosis and find out the extent of the condition. It is very important information to help decide your management and treatment.

Preparation

You will most likely have an ultrasound scan performed before the liver biopsy. You will also have a pre-biopsy assessment visit, at this visit you will have blood samples taken and also it is an opportunity for you to discuss the biopsy procedure. A senior nurse usually carries out this visit.

Procedure

Your liver biopsy will be performed on the Gastroenterology Unit at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital as a day case. On arrival the nurse will check your details and you will be asked to change into a gown. You will be asked to lie on a bed resting on your back. The doctor doing the biopsy will clean your skin and inject a local anaesthetic to numb your skin and tissue below. A specially designed needle is inserted through the skin. At this point the doctor will tell you how to breathe. The needle is inserted into and out of the liver. This takes one or two seconds. A slender core of tissue is removed with the needle and sent to the laboratory. The entire procedure from start to finish lasts 15 to 20 minutes. A sticking plaster will be put on to the area. You will be asked to lie on your right side, so the weight of your body presses on the wound. You will need to remain in bed for six hours. During this time the nurse will regularly monitor your blood pressure, pulse and biopsy area. You may experience pain or discomfort during or after the liver biopsy, this can be in the stomach, chest or right shoulder. However, this is usually temporary and medication can be given to relieve this. Once you have completed the recovery stage you can usually go home, preferably with someone to escort you. You will be given a discharge information sheet and contact number if you should have any queries.

Are there any risks involved?

In most cases a liver biopsy is obtained quickly with no problems. Occasionally some pain in the right shoulder is felt. You may have a slight swelling or bruise over the biopsy area. Rarely a serious complication can happen if the needle hits a blood vessel or bile duct. This can cause bleeding or a bile leak from the liver. The risk of significant bleeding is less than 1 in 500. It can be serious enough to need an operation.
Other risks include injury to the lungs, intestine, or gallbladder, although these rarely occur.

**When will I know the result?**

If you do not already have an appointment to return to clinic to see your doctor we will make sure that a follow up clinic appointment is sent to you usually four to six weeks.

**Further Information**

**Contacts:**

Sister Devina Mallon Tel: 0151 706 2725
Or Tel: 0151 706 2000 and ask for Bleep 596

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This leaflet is available in large print, computer disc, Braille and audiocassette. Other languages are available on request.