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LIVER BIOPSY



Liver Biopsy is a procedure which allows your doctor to obtain a small piece of liver for pathological analysis. The biopsy is performed with a special sterile needle which is passed through the skin between the ribs on the right side of your thorax and into the liver. The skin is anaesthetised with local anaesthetic before the biopsy is taken, and the procedure is generally performed with ultrasound guidance. The size of the biopsy is about that of a match-stick (2cm x 2mm wide) and pathological analysis normally takes 4-5 days before definitive results are available.

ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS?

Liver biopsy does carry risks. The liver is a vascular organ and biopsy may be associated with bleeding in 1:400 cases. Bleeding is normally experienced within the first hour or two of the biopsy and may be heralded by abdominal pain, fall in blood pressure and elevation in pulse rate. For this reason patients are monitored in hospital for a couple of hours after the procedure is performed. Significant bleeds may require blood transfusion or even surgery. Occasionally delayed haemorrhages (days later) occur and, again, blood transfusion or even surgery may be required to contain a delayed haemorrhage. Bile leaks can occur when the needle passes inadvertently through a bile duct. Perforation of the gallbladder is a recognised risk of blind biopsy.

If you have any questions regarding liver biopsy please ask your doctor before the procedure is performed.