

Paediatric haematology

# Liver biopsy – a guide for families

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

Your child's doctor has decided that your child needs a liver biopsy. This leaflet explains what the test involves.

### Why does my child need a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy is performed in all children who are being assessed for, or are on regular blood transfusion programmes. This is to determine the condition of the liver and whether there is any fibrosis which needs to be reversed. A biopsy is also recommended if there is a history of abnormal liver function.

### What does the liver biopsy involve?

While your child is under anaesthetic, the doctor will use an ultrasound scan to find the best place to take the biopsy. When this has been located, the biopsy needle is inserted through the skin into the liver and then removed, containing a small amount of liver tissue. This is then sent to the laboratories for detailed examination. The biopsy site will be covered with a dressing which can be removed three days after the procedure.

The main side effect of a liver biopsy is the risk of bleeding, so your child will be monitored closely and will have to stay in hospital overnight. They should remain in bed for as long as possible after the procedure and be encouraged to lie on their right-hand side as much as possible.

### After the liver biopsy

Your child will be able to recover from the biopsy in the Children's haematology day unit and will then be transferred to one of the inpatient wards at St Mary's Hospital. Their blood pressure, pulse and breathing rate will be monitored every 15 minutes to start with, then less frequently as your child recovers.

Following a review by the medical team, your child will be allowed to go home the following day providing they are well. A nurse will check the dressing and change it if necessary.

### When your child goes home

The biopsy site may feel uncomfortable for a day or two afterwards and so your child will need paracetamol (given according to the instructions).

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The dressing may fall off on its own. If not, it can be soaked off in the bath or shower three days after the procedure.

Your child should be able to return to school five days after the procedure. However, they should avoid any strenuous sports, particularly rugby and swimming, for six to eight weeks after the biopsy.

Younger children should also avoid any rough and tumble play for six to eight weeks. This will give the biopsy site a chance to heal completely, reducing the risk of any internal bleeding.

You should call your named nurse or the day care unit if the following occurs:

- the biopsy site bleeds
- the biopsy site oozes a lot of fluid
- the biopsy site is still painful three days after the procedure and is not eased by paracetamol
- there is redness or warmth around the site, or a temperature develops; as this is a sign of infection

## Who do I contact for more help or information?

- **BMT coordinators:** 077 6699 1070
- **Paediatric haematology day care unit:** 020 3312 5095/ 020 3312 5096

Additional patient information is available on our website:



## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals).

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You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street,  
London W2 1NY

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

[imperial.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.patient.information@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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