



Percutaneous Liver Biopsy

UPMC
Cancer Centers
*Information
for Patients*

Your doctor has ordered a percutaneous (PER-kyoo-TAY-nee-us) liver biopsy (BYE-op-see) for you. This test uses a needle to remove a tiny piece of tissue from your liver. Percutaneous means “through the skin.” No incision is made for this test.

A doctor then takes a close look at the tissue under a microscope. The test helps detect disorders of the liver.

How do I prepare for the test?

Follow the guidelines listed below. You also will get guidelines from your doctor, nurse, or testing center.

Medicines

Ask your doctor or testing center which medicines you may or may not take:

- NSAIDs, which stands for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen, such as Advil or Motrin, or arthritis medicines)
- diabetes medicines
- heart and blood pressure medicines

Note: Unless you are told otherwise, **do not** take the following medicines for one week before your biopsy: aspirin; aspirin-like products, such as Anacin or Bufferin; and Coumadin.

Diet

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your test. If your doctor or testing center tells you to take any of your regular medicines, take them with small sips of water only.

What to bring

When you come for the test, bring the following:

- the prescription slip from your doctor
- all insurance cards, forms, and referrals
- a list of all the medicines you take, both prescribed and over-the-counter
- a list of foods and medicines you are allergic to
- a responsible adult to drive you home

What will happen before the test?

The doctor will explain the test, including the benefits, risks, and other options. You then will be asked to sign a consent form. The nurse will ask you some questions and take the information you brought with you. You will put on a hospital gown. Then your blood will be taken for testing.

You may have some other tests, such as ultrasound, CT scan, or blood tests.

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What will happen during the test?

The doctor will give you an exam to locate the exact position of your liver. Then you will lie on your back. You will put your right arm under your head and left arm at your side.

Next, the area for the biopsy will be cleaned with several solutions. Sterile towels will be placed around the area.

You will get a local anesthetic (AN-es-THET-ik). Your doctor will give you a shot to numb the area. The shot is similar to shots your dentist gives you. You will feel a pinch, then a burning sensation as the anesthetic takes effect. Some people say it feels like a bee sting.

The doctor may tell you to breathe in a special way during the biopsy. You may be asked to practice this way of breathing. Take a deep breath, blow it out, and then hold. You will not breathe for the few seconds when the liver tissue is taken. The doctor will tell you when to start breathing again.

When the area is numb, a special needle will be put through your skin. The doctor will put a slight force on the needle as it enters. You may feel some pressure. After the needle is in, you may hear a “click” as the tissue is taken. You may have some mild discomfort for a few seconds.

The doctor then will remove the needle. A small dressing will be placed over the area.

What will happen after the test?

Your doctor may ask you to lie on your right side. This acts like a pressure bandage at the site of the biopsy.

- Your test is scheduled for _____ (place) on _____ (date).
- Report to _____ at _____ (time).
- Someone will call you to confirm the time to report for your test.

The nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, and breathing often. The nurse also will closely watch the biopsy site for any bleeding.

Your stay at the test center will last for 2 to 8 hours. During your stay, your diet may be clear liquids or a light meal. The length of your stay and your diet depend on your doctor’s orders.

What should I report to my doctor?

Tell the doctor or nurse **at once** if you have any of the following:

- any bleeding or a feeling of wetness at the biopsy site
- severe pain in your abdomen or other area
- trouble breathing
- nausea or vomiting
- feeling light-headed or dizzy

What should I do after my test?

You will get a list of what to do and not do after you leave the testing center. Be sure to follow these guidelines.

When and how do I get the test results?

Test results will be sent to your doctor within a week. Your doctor will talk to you about the results. With some patients, this appointment is made before the patient leaves the testing center. Other patients must call the doctor’s office to make the appointment to get their results.



The University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) is a National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. For information about cancer, call the UPCI Cancer Information and Referral Service at 412-624-1115 or 1-800-237-4724 or visit our Web site at www.upci.upmc.edu.