

# Liver Biopsy



## What is a liver biopsy?

**A**liver biopsy is a medical procedure performed in order to obtain a small sample of the liver. This is accomplished with a special needle, and leaves a very small scar.

## Why does a child need a liver biopsy?

The most common reasons for a liver biopsy include the evaluation of:

- Jaundice
- Liver inflammation (hepatitis)
- Abnormal liver function tests
- An enlarged liver

## What is the preparation for a liver biopsy?

Your doctor orders blood tests to measure the ability of the blood to clot normally. This will help minimize complications from the procedure, such as bleeding. Before the procedure, the child fasts for several hours, so that safe sedation or anesthesia can be provided. The use of aspirin or ibuprofen needs to be discontinued for at least 2 weeks before the test.

## How is the procedure performed?

A liver biopsy is always done in the hospital. After adequate sedation or anesthesia, the skin is cleansed and a needle is inserted through the skin and into the liver and quickly withdrawn. This removes a core of liver tissue.

After the procedure, the child is observed and monitored regularly until it's safe to go home. The time of discharge differs according to the age of the child and the reason for the biopsy. It can vary from 6 to 24 hours. Medicine to control pain is provided as needed, although the local anesthetic used will help minimize pain.

## What are the risks of a liver biopsy?

Liver needle biopsy is considered a safe procedure. The major risks include:

- Bleeding
- Perforation of the lung
- Gallbladder puncture

After discharge, your healthcare provider should be called if any of the following occur:

- Persistent abdominal or chest pain
- Vomiting
- Pallor, weakness or dizziness
- Bleeding from the site of the biopsy
- Passage of tarry black stools

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: [www.naspghan.org](http://www.naspghan.org)

*IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.*

## SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:



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Speak up if you have any questions or concerns