

**Please report to the  
Day Surgery Department ---Level 1 Bishop Dowling Wing.**

**Charlton Campus**

**Please allow time for parking**

- Please arrive 1 hour prior to your appointment time
  - Eat a light breakfast ( toast / tea)
  - Bring a list of all of your current medications
- Stop taking your blood thinners 5 days before your appointment
  - Take all of your heart / blood pressure medications
  - If you are diabetic, take all of your medications
- Have a responsible person accompany you and drive you home

**St. Joseph's**  
Healthcare  Hamilton

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Healthcare  Hamilton

Department of  
Diagnostic Imaging

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**What you need to  
know about  
Liver Biopsies**

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## **What is a liver biopsy?**

A biopsy is a procedure where a needle is inserted directly into the liver to take a small piece of tissue for lab testing.

## **Why do I need a liver biopsy?**

Tests have shown that there is an abnormality in your liver. The biopsy will give your doctor more information about the cause of the abnormality. This information will be used to plan the best treatment for you.

## **Where will the biopsy be done?**

The biopsy will be done in the Diagnostic Imaging Department by a specially trained doctor called a radiologist, who will use ultrasound or x-ray guidance to do the biopsy. Our team consists of doctors, nurses, medical radiation technologists and sonographers.

## **How do I get ready for the biopsy?**

Have a light breakfast the day of the procedure. Please take all of your medications except blood thinners with a small sip of water, especially heart and blood pressure pills. When you arrive in the Day Surgery department, a nurse will get you ready for the procedure. An intravenous (iv) will be placed in your arm. You will be asked about your medical history and any medications that you are taking. You will have to change into a hospital gown for the procedure. The radiologist will explain the procedure and answer any questions that you may have. If you agree to the procedure, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

## **What will happen during the procedure?**

You will be positioned on a stretcher or an x-ray table lying on your back. Images will be taken using either ultrasound or x-ray to localize the area of the lesion or abnormality. Local anesthetic is injected to numb the skin and deeper tissues. The nurse will give you medications to help you relax and reduce your pain if needed. The radiologist will use x-ray or ultrasound guidance to insert a small needle into the liver tissue. Several specimens (pieces of tissue) will be taken and sent to the lab for testing. The needle will be removed and a small bandage will be placed on the insertion site.

## **How long will the biopsy take?**

It will take about 30 minutes for the whole procedure. You will be at the hospital for about 5 hours in total.

## **What will happen after the liver biopsy?**

You will be taken back to the Day Surgery Department where you will rest in bed for 3 to 4 hours. Mild abdominal or shoulder pain is common after a liver biopsy. Pain relief such as Tylenol can be used to reduce this discomfort. This pain can last for a few minutes or a few hours. You will be able to eat and drink after the first hour. When the rest period is over you will be discharged home. A responsible adult must accompany you home. Rarely, overnight admission is required for pain relief. The results of the biopsy will be sent to the ordering doctor and your family physician. This takes approximately 5 to 7 days.

## **What are the risks and complications?**

Bleeding and infection are complications of a liver biopsy. Every precaution is taken to prevent these from happening .