

# Transjugular Liver Biopsy (TJLB)

Information for patients



This leaflet tells you about having a transjugular liver biopsy. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such discussions.

If you have any questions about the procedure please ask the doctor who has referred you or the vascular radiology department in Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (contact details on page 6 of this leaflet).

### **What is transjugular liver biopsy (TJLB)?**

A liver biopsy is a procedure that involves taking a tiny specimen of the liver for examination under a microscope to diagnose certain conditions. In most cases, a liver biopsy is taken through the skin by passing a fine needle through into the liver.

A transjugular liver biopsy (TJLB) is an alternative way of obtaining the liver specimen. This method is used in patients who have abnormal clotting of the blood or fluid collecting within the abdomen. This technique reduces the risk of bleeding after the biopsy.

## Why do you need a transjugular liver biopsy?

The doctors looking after you have decided that you need a liver biopsy to obtain more information about your liver problem. The information gained from the biopsy will help the doctors in the treatment of your condition.

## Are there any risks?

Transjugular liver biopsy is a safe procedure, but as with any medical procedure there are some risks and complications that can arise. The overall risk of a problem requiring further treatment is low (<1%).

- The main risk is bleeding after the biopsy. However, a TJLB has a lower risk of bleeding than a conventional liver biopsy taken through the side of the abdomen.
- Sometimes the tube passing through the heart towards the liver can cause irregular heartbeats. This usually returns to normal within a few seconds.
- There is a small risk that the biopsy will fail to get an adequate sample for diagnosis. In some cases a repeat procedure or a different procedure can be done to overcome this. If this happens your doctors will discuss the options with you.

## Radiation

Transjugular liver biopsy involves use of X-rays to visualise the blood vessels. Radiation doses for this procedure are generally low, though occasionally higher doses are required if the procedure is long or technically challenging.

## Are you required to make any special preparations?

A transjugular liver biopsy is usually carried out under local anaesthetic. You may be asked not to eat for four hours before the procedure, although you may still drink clear fluids such as water.

If your blood clotting is abnormal, you may be given special blood transfusions to try and correct this. If you have any concerns about having blood transfusions, you should discuss these with your doctor.

If you have any allergies or have previously had a reaction to the dye (contrast agent), you must tell the radiology staff before you have the test.

*If you are pregnant or suspect that you may be pregnant you should notify the department. Radiation exposure during pregnancy can lead to birth defects.*

## Who will you see?

A specially trained team led by an interventional radiologist within the radiology department. Interventional radiologists have special expertise in reading the images and using imaging to guide catheters and wires to aid diagnosis and treatment.

## Where will this take place?

In the interventional radiology suite or theatre which is usually located within the radiology department. This is similar to an operating theatre into which specialised X-ray equipment has been installed.

## What happens during the biopsy?

You will be taken to the X-ray department and transferred onto the X-ray table. Everything will be kept sterile and the radiologist will wear a theatre gown and sterile gloves. You will have a cannula (small plastic tube) placed in a vein in your arm so that you may be given medication if necessary.

You will be monitored during the procedure by a qualified nurse who will be checking your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen saturation levels.

The right side of your neck will be cleaned with antiseptic fluid and will be covered by a sterile towel. The radiologist may do an ultrasound scan of your neck to see the veins before giving you an injection of local anaesthetic. The right side is used in most cases but sometimes we have to use the left side if the right jugular vein is blocked or too small.

After the local anaesthetic has been given, a small tube (called a catheter) will be inserted into the neck vein. The radiologist will then direct the catheter through your veins into position inside the liver and will perform the biopsy using a needle.

## Will it hurt?

When the local anaesthetic is injected, it will sting for a short while, but this soon wears off. When the catheter is placed in the liver, you may get a dull ache in the right shoulder. This will go away once the tube has been removed. Some people feel a sharp pinch inside the abdomen as the biopsy is taken, but this will only last 1–2 seconds.

## How long will it take?

Every patient's situation is different and it is not always easy to predict how complex or how straightforward the procedure will be. As a guide, expect to be in the X-ray department for about an hour to two.

## What happens afterwards?

You will be taken back to recovery or your ward. Nurses on the ward will carry out routine observations, such as taking your pulse and blood pressure, to make sure that there are no problems. You will generally stay in bed for a few hours, until you have recovered.

## Finally

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your procedure with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure.

## Contact details

### Vascular Radiology

Leeds General Infirmary: **0113 392 3311**

St. James's Hospital: **0113 206 6841**

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## What did you think of your care?

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Developed by: Dr. Jeevan K Mahaveer, Locum Consultant Interventional Radiologist and Dr Christopher Hammond, Consultant Vascular Radiologist  
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