

# A Patient's Guide to A Kidney Biopsy

Renal Department  
Lister Hospital



## A Patient's Guide to Kidney Biopsy

This leaflet is intended to provide you with information regarding a kidney biopsy (sometimes called a renal biopsy).

### What is a kidney biopsy?

A biopsy is a medical procedure that involves taking a small sample of kidney tissue, using a special hollow needle, so it can be examined under a microscope.

Kidney biopsies are usually straightforward procedures. A biopsy is undertaken as a day case but may involve an overnight stay in hospital.

### Why are biopsies performed?

It is not always possible to tell exactly what is going on in a kidney from blood tests results, ultrasound images or X-rays.

Looking at a small sample of kidney tissue under a microscope can help the doctors discover exactly what the problem is with your kidneys and help them decide the most appropriate treatment.

### What do I need to bring with me on the day of the procedure?

You will need to wear comfortable clothes and bring into hospital your usual medication, nightwear and toiletries in case of an overnight stay.

You are advised not to wear jewellery, make-up or nail varnish.

## Preparation for the procedure

The biopsy procedure is usually performed in the treatment room on ward 6B and you will be given an appointment time to attend the ward.

We may advise you to stop taking any medicines which affect blood clotting, such as aspirin or warfarin, for one week before your biopsy. You may need to discuss your medication with your doctor if you take medicines for other conditions.

If you are prescribed high blood pressure medication it is important to take it as usual. Your procedure may be cancelled if your blood pressure is too high.

Usually you may eat a light breakfast unless advised otherwise, then only drink fluids up to two hours before your appointment time.

A blood test is normally taken before the biopsy to check how well your blood clots. This is to identify a possible risk of bleeding following the biopsy.

You will be asked to sign a consent form before the biopsy to say that you understand the procedure and you understand that there may be a small risk involved.

We will provide a gown for you to wear.

## How is it done?

Your kidneys lie just below your ribcage, towards the side and back of your abdomen. This means in order to reach the kidney you will be asked to lie on your front on a bed. The skin over the kidney to be biopsied will be cleaned with antiseptic, then a local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area. This can sting at first but makes the skin numb so that you will not be able to feel any pain or discomfort. The surface of the kidney is also numbed with another needle.

If the biopsy is of a transplanted kidney you will be asked to lie on your back and the local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin over the transplant area.

The doctor will use an ultrasound scanner, which locates the kidney, to make sure the needle is inserted at exactly the right place. The scan is painless.

You will be asked to hold your breath for 5-10 seconds while the needle is pushed in and out. This is because the kidneys move slightly when you breathe in and out.

## What are the risks of kidney biopsy?

Complications are rare. In a small number of cases there is some bleeding from the biopsy site. This is usually minor and soon stops. You may notice a small amount of blood in your urine after the procedure. This is quite common, but always seek the advice of the ward staff if you are concerned.

- There is a 3% risk of heavily blood stained urine.

When tissue is taken from an important organ, such as your kidneys, you will need to stay in hospital for at least six hours after the procedure. This is so that you can rest and hospital staff can ensure that there is no internal bleeding. It is rare for serious bleeding to occur following a biopsy but if it does, you may need to have an operation or a blood transfusion.

- There is a 1 in 500 to 1 in 1000 risk of intervention, either surgery or use of catheter under x-ray control to stop bleeding.

## After a kidney biopsy

You will need to lie on a bed for six hours to check that you have no bleeding, so you may wish to bring a book or media player for this time. Your blood pressure will be frequently monitored and any urine you pass will be checked for blood. You may need to stay in hospital overnight.

Some patients experience a little discomfort, which is usually eased by simple pain-killers such as paracetamol. **You should avoid any non-steroidal pain-killers such as ibuprofen** (the doctor and ward staff can advise you).

You will need to arrange for a member of your family or a friend to drive you home, and you will need someone at home with you the night following the procedure. You should continue to rest flat.

You are strongly advised not to drive for two days and not to lift any heavy objects or partake in contact or extreme sports for two weeks following your kidney biopsy.

The doctors will advise you when you can return to work and when to restart your medication, including any medicines which affect blood clotting.

A provisional report of the biopsy is often available within 3-4 days, but the full results can take up to a month. The renal team will discuss your results with you, either while you are in hospital or at your next clinic appointment.

### What complications might occur?

These are the main complications of the procedure:

**Bleeding:** bleeding at the biopsy site is rare. Any bleeding that does occur usually stops on its own, but occasionally requires further treatment..

**Infection:** although very rare, an infection following the procedure may require further treatment.

**Pain:** This is usually mild and manageable.

**Damage to the kidney:** This is very rare and the use of ultrasound guidance minimizes this risk.

Please contact Ward 6B on 01438 285063 if you experience any of the following:

- Your urine appears blood stained
- The site of the biopsy is red, angry looking or swollen
- You develop a temperature or fever
- The biopsy site is still painful three days after your procedure and painkillers do not help
- You have any other concerns regarding the biopsy

## Questions that I would like to ask the staff

## Contact details:

Ward 6B, Lister Hospital      01438 285063

## Further information:

Patient information website:

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Biopsy-Kidney.htm>

[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

Date of publication: January 2012

Reviewed: November 2015

Author: G Taylor    Reviewer: J Cloran

Reference: KidneyBiopsy      Version: 2

Review Date: November 2018

© East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

You can request this information in a different format or another language.