

Having a Fibroscan

This information leaflet explains what a Fibroscan involves and why it is being recommended for you. If you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to speak to nurse or doctor caring for you.

What is a fibroscan and what does it measure?

A fibroscan is a type of scan that can measure the “stiffness” of your liver, which in turn reflects the degree of scarring in your liver (fibrosis).

It is a simple, painless test which gives immediate results. It does not have any potential complications or risks and is non-invasive, which means that it does not break the skin or enter your body.

Having a fibroscan will help your doctor/nurse understand the condition of your liver and if there is any scarring (fibrosis) present. This will help them plan your care and treatment.

Are there any alternatives to a fibroscan?

Your doctor or nurse will explain any alternatives available to you in detail.

One option is to have a liver biopsy. This is where a small sample of liver tissue is removed with a needle. A liver biopsy has several disadvantages: for example, you need to stay in hospital for several hours after the procedure. It also carries several small risks, such as internal bleeding after the biopsy.

In approximately 10% of patients, it can be difficult to obtain accurate results from a Fibroscan. Sometimes a liver biopsy may still be recommended despite a Fibroscan being performed. If a biopsy is needed, then your doctor will discuss this with you at your next appointment.

What are the precautions?

You cannot have a Fibroscan if you have ascites (a build-up of fluid that causes your abdomen to swell). Please speak to your doctor or nurse if you think this applies to you.

What are the expected benefits of a Fibroscan?

Having a Fibroscan will help your doctor/nurse to understand how much scarring is in your liver. This will help him/her to plan your treatment.

How do I prepare for the scan?

Please do not eat or drink anything for three hours before your Fibroscan. If you need to, you can take small sips of water or clear fluid but avoid drinking large amounts of fluid. Ideally, we ask you not to drink alcohol before your scan. You should continue taking any prescribed medication.

You will not need to remove any clothing for the scan, but we will need to expose the right side of your abdomen (tummy). Therefore, we recommend that you wear a top and trousers or a skirt on the day of your test. You will not need to remove any jewellery near the site of the scan, such as a belly button piercing.

What happens before the scan?

You will need to book in with reception and then take a seat in the waiting area. A nurse/healthcare assistant will show you into one of the consulting rooms where you will be able to ask any questions you have about the Fibroscan. Once you have discussed the scan and providing you are happy to go ahead, you will have the test.

What happens during a fibroscan?

You will be asked to lie flat on your back on an examination couch and to place your right arm behind your head. The nurse/healthcare assistant will feel your abdomen to find the right place to perform the scan. He/she will apply a water-based gel to your skin and place a probe on the right side of your abdomen (tummy) with minimal pressure. The nurse/healthcare assistant will take a minimum of 10 readings. You will feel a slight vibration/pulse against the skin each time a reading is taken. It should not hurt and will make no noise.

The scan should take between 10 and 20 minutes to perform.

How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

You can go straight home after your Fibroscan. You do not need an escort to take you home. You may eat and drink normally after your Fibroscan.

When can I return to work?

You will be able to return to work immediately.

When will I get the results?

The result will be sent to the doctor or nurse who referred you for the Fibroscan and he/she will discuss it with you at your next outpatient appointment.

Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss with your medical team.

Sources of information

British Liver Trust – www.britishlivertrust.org.uk or call 0800 652 7330

Liver\$Life – www.liver4life.org.uk or call 08000 749494

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr Stephen Fong – Consultant, Gastroenterologist

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