

Having a fibroscan

Information and advice for patients

Gastroenterology

What is a fibroscan?

A fibroscan is a scan of your liver which measures how elastic (or how stiff) your liver is. It is a painless procedure which involves a probe being passed over the top right area of your abdomen. It is similar to an ultrasound scan during pregnancy and will be carried out during your outpatient clinic appointment.

A healthy liver should be soft and elastic. The more stiff your liver is the more damage has been done to it.

What are the benefits of having a fibroscan?

The benefit of having a fibroscan is that it measures how elastic your liver is. This can help your doctor to diagnose how damaged your liver is and decide what treatment you might need. It is helpful for diagnosing the degree of liver damage in people with:

- Viral hepatitis B and C
- Alcoholic liver disease
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
- Hepatitis C and HIV co-infection

What are the risks of having a fibroscan?

There are no risks to having a fibroscan, it is not invasive and is painless.

What are the risks of not having a fibroscan?

If you do not have the fibroscan it will be more difficult for your doctor to accurately diagnose the condition of your liver which means they may not be able to decide the best treatment for you. This could mean that eventually your liver will become seriously damaged.

Are there any alternatives to this test?

An alternative to having a fibroscan is to have a liver biopsy, however this is an invasive procedure which involves a needle being inserted into your liver to remove a very small piece of it. A liver biopsy carries risks such as bleeding.

Preparing for a fibroscan

You do not need any special preparation before having a fibroscan.

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Having the fibroscan

The fibroscan takes about 10 minutes. This is what happens:

1. You will be asked to lie down, pull your top up and put your right hand above your head.
2. Some jelly will be applied to your skin.
3. The probe is then placed over the top right area of your abdomen, where your liver is situated. The probe will take 10 readings of the elasticity of your liver.

After having a fibroscan

When the readings have been taken your doctor will discuss the results with you and plan your treatment.

After your appointment you will be able to go home and continue with your normal daily activities.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about having a fibroscan you can contact:

Gastroenterology Nurse Specialists

0121 507 3982

Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

Further information

For more information about liver tests and liver problems:

British Liver Trust

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

0800 652 7330

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology, 'Ultrasound-based transient elastography for the detection of hepatic fibrosis: systematic review and meta-analysis', October 2007
- Gut, 'Diagnosis of cirrhosis by transient elastography (FibroScan): a prospective study', March 2006

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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