

Fibroscan

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

Are there any risks in having a Fibroscan?

It does not have any potential complications or risks. It is non-invasive, which means that it does not break the skin or enter your body. It can be used safely in most people, including pregnant women and people with implantable devices such as a pacemaker or an internal defibrillator.

Who is eligible to use the service?

People who are referred to our liver service through their GP or are already under the hepatology service requiring regular follow up.

What is a Fibroscan?

A Fibroscan is a type of ultrasound that can measure the degree of scarring within your liver. It is a simple, painless test that uses high frequency sound waves. Your doctor recommended that you have this test to help us understand the condition of your liver. It is carried out by a trained operator (nurse or technician).

What are the benefits of this scan?

Having a Fibroscan helps to establish how much damage or scarring may be present in the liver and helps your doctor to plan treatment and follow-up.

Are there any alternatives?

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 risks, such as internal bleeding after the biopsy. For further information on this procedure, please ask for the leaflet "Having a liver biopsy".

Is any preparation needed?

Ideally, you should 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. You should continue taking any prescribed medication.

NB: if you are diabetic, please eat and drink as normal to avoid low blood sugar levels.

Is equipment or special clothing needed?

You will not need to remove any clothing for the scan, but we will need to expose the right side of your abdomen (tummy). You will not need to remove any jewellery near the site of the scan, such as a belly button piercing.

What happens before the Fibroscan?

You will need to book in with the clinic receptionist in the Medical Outpatient Department and then take a seat in the waiting area. You will be called 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, providing you are happy to go ahead, you will have the test.

What happen during the scan?

You will be asked to lie on an examination couch and place your right arm above your head. The technician will feel your abdomen to find the right place to perform the scan. He/she will place a probe on your abdomen and trigger the probe to start. The sound waves will be sent out from the probe in pulses. They will pass through your skin to your liver and bounce back. This will feel like a gentle flick against the side of your skin, it doesn't hurt. The scanner measures the time it takes for the sound wave to bounce back.

We will repeat this at least 10 times to make sure we get an accurate result. The mean (average) reading is then calculated by the scanner, which will show your doctor your liver stiffness. The scan is usually very quick, however more difficult scans can take 10-20 minutes to perform.

What happen after the scan?

As soon as the Fibroscan is finished you will be able to either go home or return to work. The operator will give you the result immediately after the examination. The result will also be sent to the doctor who referred you for the Fibroscan.

Where to go for the service and how to find it?

The test is performed in the Outpatient Department, Level 2, North Devon District Hospital.

Is there a waiting time?

The majority of scans can be done on the same day as part of your follow-up appointment. Fibroscans are often pre-ordered prior to you attending your appointment as part of the referral triage, or clinic plan for follow up investigations. Sometimes you may be referred to come back for another appointment to have your Fibroscan performed.

How often do I need to attend?

If the test result is normal, you may not need to do the test again. Depending on the results, in some cases you may need a follow-up Fibroscan.

Do I need to bring any documents?

You will be asked to show the appointment letter once you arrive at the reception.

Who to contact I cannot attend?

If you are unable to attend your procedure please contact Kelly (Consultant Secretary) on 01271 322447 so we can rearrange your appointment.

Are there any advantages or disadvantages that need to be explained?

The advantage of a Fibroscan is that it assesses the degree of scarring within your liver non-invasively, and gives a result in real time. This aids the management plan of your doctor. There are no specific disadvantages to this test.

Who to contact if I have any more questions?

If you have any queries, please contact the Liver Specialist Nurses on 01392 406108 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or Kelly, Consultant Secretary on 01271 322447 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm).

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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