Having a Fibroscan

If your doctor suspects that you may have damage to your liver, they may recommend that you have a Fibroscan. This factsheet explains what this involves.

What is a Fibroscan?
It is a scan similar to an ultrasound used during pregnancy which will measure how elastic (or how stiff) your liver is. A healthy liver should be soft and elastic, and if your liver is stiff this is a sign that some damage has occurred.

How is it done?
It is a painless procedure which involves a probe being passed over the top right area of your stomach. Your Fibroscan will be carried out at an outpatient clinic appointment.

What are the benefits?
The results of the scan can help your doctor find out about the level of damage that affects your liver, and decide what treatment you might need.

It is helpful for measuring 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
- haemochromatosis (iron overload disorder)
- other liver diseases

What are the risks?
There are no risks involved. It is painless and not invasive (meaning it’s not carried out inside your body and does not break the skin).

What if I choose not to have a Fibroscan?
If you don’t have the scan it will be more difficult for your doctor to accurately diagnose the condition of your liver and to decide the best treatment for you. This could mean that eventually your liver will become seriously damaged.

Are there any alternatives to this method?
An alternative to having a Fibroscan is to have a liver biopsy (where a needle is inserted into your liver to remove a very small piece of it which can then be analysed in a laboratory). This is a more invasive procedure, and your medical staff will be able to discuss the risks of it with you if you have further questions.
Further information

Hepatology services
Specialist medicine
D level West Wing
University Hospital Southampton
Tremona Road
Southampton
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