

Patient information factsheet

Having a microwave ablation of the liver

We've written this fact sheet as a guide to having a microwave ablation of the liver. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If there is anything you don't understand, a member of your healthcare team will be happy to explain further.

What is a microwave ablation of the liver?

Microwave ablation is a treatment that aims to destroy liver tumours without removing them. This technique is used in patients with a few small tumours, avoiding the need for surgery, by inserting the thin treatment probes into the tumour through the skin which are placed using CT imaging.

The probe delivers microwave energy that aims to heat and destroy the abnormal tissue.

The procedure will take place in the radiology department, and usually takes approximately one to two hours

Preparation for the procedure

Before your general anaesthetic we will explain any preparation you may need. We will let you know if you need to avoid food and drink for a number of hours.

If you are female and of child bearing capacity, you will need to complete a form with the date of your last period and whether there is any possibility you may be pregnant. This examination should only be performed if we can be sure that you are not pregnant because radiation can be harmful to an unborn baby.

During the procedure

For your comfort this procedure is done under a general anaesthetic. This means you will be asleep throughout.

While you are asleep probes are inserted through the skin, targeting the tumour. We use imaging equipment to confirm the treatment location.

Microwaves are delivered from the ablation system through the probes, heating the target area to more than 60°C and killing the tissue.

When ablation is completed, the probes are removed and a small dressing is placed on the sites of insertion.

After the procedure

We will monitor you after your treatment and in most cases you will stay overnight in hospital. The medical team will see you before you leave and if you are feeling well you will be discharged home.

It is important to avoid heavy exercise and heavy lifting activities for the following week. Do not drive for at least two days after your procedure.

You may experience some local discomfort and tenderness depending on the site of the treatment. Take regular pain relief if you need to.

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Risks

There is some exposure to radiation during the procedure because x-rays are used. However, as this is a low dose examination, exposure to radiation is kept to a minimum. Generally, the amount of radiation you are exposed to during this procedure is equivalent to between a few days and a few years of exposure to natural radiation from the environment.

It is highly unlikely that you will have problems following your treatment.

Go to the emergency department immediately if you experience:

- severe abdominal pain
- a feeling of being lightheaded or faint
- shortness of breath
- a fever or vomiting

If you develop minor ongoing discomfort in your abdomen, or swelling of your calf (without shortness of breath), please contact your GP within 24 hours of noticing these symptoms.

Results

You will be asked to come in for a follow-up CT scan within a month of your procedure. If you do not receive an invitation to an appointment, please contact the interventional radiology secretaries as detailed below. You will not usually be seen by a doctor when you come for your scan or be given any results on that day. The results will be discussed with you at a subsequent outpatient clinic appointment with your referring consultant.

Contact us

It is important that you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure.

If you have any questions before the examination please telephone the interventional oncology specialist nurse on 07786 126392 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm) or leave a message on the answer phone and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Interventional radiology secretary
Telephone: 023 8120 8974
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (voicemail available)

Useful links

NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.