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Gastroenterological Society of Australia

Information about

FibroScan

What is a FibroScan?

A FibroScan is a simple test to find out how much liver scarring and fatty change you have in your liver. The build-up of scar tissue is called 'fibrosis' and is associated with a stiff liver. Fatty change, also called 'steatosis' is when fat builds up in your liver cells.

A FibroScan is similar to an ultrasound scan. However, instead of using high-frequency sound waves to create a picture like an ultrasound does, FibroScan uses a series of short, pulsed, low-frequency sound waves to measure liver stiffness. The result is displayed as a number, or score, rather than a picture, which tells your doctor how much liver scarring and fat you have.

What are the benefits of a FibroScan?

- The scan will give your doctor more information about your liver condition and help them plan the best treatment for you
- The test can be done quickly and easily at your doctors' surgery if they have access to the machine
- The scan is non-invasive and painless
- You will not need any injections or anaesthetic
- You can have it even if you are pregnant or have a heart pacemaker
- You will be able to return home or to work afterwards

Are there any risks?

A FibroScan has no side effects apart from mild discomfort. After having the scan, you can safely drive, return to work and carry out your normal daily activities.

Are there any limitations?

Your FibroScan results may be less accurate if you:

- Are currently pregnant
- Have a waist measurement over 100cm or are obese
- Have a build-up of fluid in your abdomen ('ascites')
- Have liver inflammation or a high alanine aminotransferase (ALT) level
- Have too little bile flowing out of your liver (biliary obstruction).
- If you have a heart pacemaker you should let your health professional know.

What happens during the scan?

Your scan will be carried out by a qualified health professional who will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to lie on your back with your right arm raised above your head. A gel will be applied to your skin over the liver on the right-side of your belly, between the ribs.

A small handheld sensor is then pressed on the surface of your skin. The gel allows pulsed sound waves to pass through the liver more easily. The gel is wiped off at the end of the procedure.

Do I need to prepare for the scan?

Please ensure you do not have anything to eat for 2-3 hours before your appointment, unless you have

diabetes, or your GP has asked you not to fast. If there is a reason why a patient should not fast, this is considered on a case-by-case basis. If you have not fasted, let the health professional performing the FibroScan know. You should take any prescribed medication as you would normally. You may have sips of water.

Do I need to give consent?

You do not need to sign anything, but your GP will discuss the test with you before your appointment. This is a legal requirement. When you attend your appointment a qualified health professional will discuss the procedure with you again. If at any time you change your mind about having the scan, please let your doctor or the health professional know.

How and when do I get my result?

Your treating doctor or liver specialist will go through the result with you. Your GP will also be provided with the result.

The scan takes about 15 minutes, but please allow 30-40 minutes for your appointment.

You are welcome to bring a friend or relative

Acknowledgements

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Ms Kindness Bondezi, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Storr Liver Centre, Westmead Hospital, Westmead, Sydney NSW Australia
Prof Jacob George Storr Liver Centre, The Westmead Institute for Medical Research, Westmead Hospital and University of Sydney NSW Australia

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Level 1, 517 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000 | Phone: 1300 766 176 | email: gesa@gesa.org.au | Website: http://www.gesa.org.au

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