Cardiac Biopsy

How to prepare and what to expect

Cardiac biopsy is thought of as the “gold standard” for diagnosing cardiac rejection. It is done in the Catheterization Lab (“Cath Lab”) under sterile conditions. Our transplant cardiologists do cardiac biopsies on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Your transplant coordinator will contact you with your results the day after your biopsy.

How to Prepare for Your Cardiac Biopsy

- Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your biopsy.
- Time your evening doses of anti-rejection medicines so your blood draw occurs 12 hours after you take them. Bring your morning doses with you to take after your blood draw.
- You must have a blood draw before your biopsy.

If You Have Diabetes

Follow these instructions to prepare for your biopsy if you have diabetes.

- If you take insulin: You will need to talk with your diabetes care provider before your biopsy. Ask this provider how to adjust your insulin doses the night before and morning of your biopsy.
- If you manage your diabetes with oral medicine: Do not take your diabetes pill(s) the morning of your biopsy.

Day of Your Biopsy

- Blood draw: Your blood draw should be done 1 hour before your biopsy appointment time. After your blood draw, take your morning doses of anti-rejection medicines and go to the Cath Lab on the 2nd floor.
- Biopsy: You will need to fill out paperwork before your biopsy. Then, a nurse will bring you to the biopsy lab, where you will change your clothes. The nurse will help you get onto the exam table and will then clean the side of your neck with a sterile solution.

Your blood draw should be done 1 hour before your biopsy appointment time.
**Remember:**
- *Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your biopsy.*
- *Have a blood draw before your biopsy.*
- *Be on time for your appointment.*

### Your Biopsy Procedure
- The doctor will numb your neck, and then make a small puncture. A thin hollow tube called a Swan Ganz catheter will be inserted through the puncture and into a vein. The doctor will carefully move the catheter through the vein into the right atrium (upper chamber) of your heart.
- The Swan Ganz catheter is then removed and a *bioptome* is inserted to collect a small amount of heart tissue. This tissue will be sent to the pathology lab.
- After the procedure, pressure is held on the puncture site until the bleeding stops. A dressing (bandage) is placed over the puncture.
- You will then go to the radiology department for a chest X-ray. This is done after every biopsy.

### Things to Remember
- You may also have a clinic visit the same day as your biopsy.
- If you have ANY sedation for the cardiac biopsy, you MUST have a responsible adult with you to drive you home. You **cannot drive yourself or take a bus or taxi.**
- You may have pain at the incision site. We recommend you use acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain relief.
- You may also have bruising at the incision site. This will go away on its own.
- If the dressing becomes soaked with blood, apply direct pressure and a new dressing. If the bleeding continues, go to the emergency room to be checked.

### When to Call Your Doctor
Get medical care **RIGHT AWAY** if you have any of these symptoms after your biopsy:
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Irregular heart beat
Biopsy Results

Most times, you will get the results from your cardiac biopsy the next day. This chart shows the possible results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>What It Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No significant rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Mild rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Mild to moderate rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderate rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Severe rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Very severe rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Widespread rejection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nurse coordinator will talk with you about your biopsy and blood test results. Based on these results, we may adjust your medicine doses or prescribe other treatments.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Cardiology Clinic:
Weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call 206-598-4300.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-744-2500. Say you are a heart transplant patient. A nurse will assess your problem and help you.