

Paracentesis

Information for Patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

This leaflet tells you about paracentesis also known as abdominal drain, how to prepare for it, and also what will happen during and after the procedure.

What is ascites?

Ascites is the medical term for a build up of fluid in the abdomen (tummy). It is normal for a small amount of fluid to be in the abdominal cavity and this is continuously being created and absorbed. There are a number of causes of ascites however it most commonly occurs in patients with liver disease.

What are the symptoms of ascites?

The presence of the excess fluid in the abdomen can cause a number of symptoms, including swollen tummy resulting in pain, poor appetite, shortness of breath, indigestion, nausea and vomiting and reduced mobility (difficulty in walking).

What can be done about it?

To reduce the symptoms we need to remove the excess fluid. This can be done by taking medication known as diuretics or water tablets (commonly spironolactone), however this is not always possible and the quickest way of removing the fluid is to drain it using a temporary tube inserted into the abdomen. This procedure is known as paracentesis.

Arranging a paracentesis

The procedure will be arranged by the Liver Specialist Nurse. An appointment will be arranged for you to attend the University Hospital of North Tees. The appointment will be for you to attend at 9.00am this is to ensure there is plenty of time to carry out the procedure. You will be asked to have a blood test taken in the days prior to your appointment; the Liver Specialist Nurse will supply you with a blood form. This can be taken at your GP surgery or you could attend your local hospital phlebotomy service.

The day of your appointment

It is advisable to wear something loose around your abdomen for example jogging bottoms or a loose fitting skirt or you can bring a change of clothing with you. It is advisable that a responsible adult brings you to your appointment and is available to

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take you home afterwards. On the day of your appointment **do not take** your diuretics for example spironolactone or furosemide.

The receptionist at the Medical Day Unit will book you in and the nurse will ask some questions about your health and medications. **Please ensure you bring with you a list of your medication.**

What happens during the procedure?

A small plastic tube called a cannula (a fine tube) will be placed into a vein, usually in the back of your hand or arm using a fine needle as we may need to replace some fluid during the procedure.

At the start of your procedure you will be required to lie on a bed. The Doctor or Nurse will examine you to decide the best position to insert the drain into your abdomen. In some cases the Doctor may need to use an ultrasound scan in order to locate the fluid.

Once it has been decided the best place for the drain, we will thoroughly clean the site before giving a small injection of a local anaesthetic to numb the area before inserting the drain.

A tube will be inserted to act as a drain. This is securely attached to your skin with an adhesive dressing; it will then be attached to a bag to collect the fluid coming from your abdomen. The bag is then attached to a catheter stand; this allows us to empty it at regular intervals.

A small amount of the fluid will be sent to the lab for analysis and the results of this will be available that day.

Once the drain is in place you will be asked to sit in a chair to assist the removal of fluid from around the abdomen. The drain will stay in place for a maximum of six hours before it is removed to minimise the risk of infection.

You will remain in the chair throughout the day although you will be able to use the toilet facilities as normal. At regular intervals the Nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and record the amount of fluid removed.

What happens after the procedure?

After six hours, or if there is no further fluid, you will be asked to lie on the bed so the drain can be removed by the Nurse. This is simple and painless. Once the drain is removed a waterproof dressing will be placed over the area and should remain in place for 48 hours and kept as dry as possible.

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The cannula will be removed and a dressing applied. Once the Nurse is satisfied that you have no bleeding from the drain site and your temperature and blood pressure are stable you will be discharged home, this is usually after 8 hours from your arrival.

What are the risks?

As with any procedure there are risks, complications and side effects. Paracentesis is a safe procedure with a very small rate of significant complications (less than 1 in 1000 people).¹

Common after the procedure the patient can experience:

- lethargy – it is common to feel tired after the procedure
- pain – some patients experience increased discomfort in the tummy
- leakage – this can occur up to 72 hours after the procedure.²

Rare complications:

- infection in the abdominal cavity
- bleeding from the drain site
- develop low blood
- perforation damage to the internal organs
- death (very rare).²

Do you have to stay in hospital overnight?

For most patients the procedure is carried out as a day case, however rarely you may need to be admitted to the ward. Once the drain is removed and you are feeling well you should be able to return home.

What to do once you get home?

You should weigh yourself daily and measure around your abdomen weekly, keeping a record of this will help plan for any future appointments you may need. If you wish to discuss booking an appointment for paracentesis you should contact the Liver Specialist Nurse see contact details.

Contact Numbers

For further advice or information contact:

Liver Specialist Nurse
telephone: 01642 617617 ext 46127
Monday to Friday. 8.30am – 4.30pm

Out of hours – contact your GP

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NHS Choices

telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)

Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones

or via the website at www.nhs.uk

References

1. Aithel GP & Moore KP (2006) *Guidelines on the Management of Ascites in Cirrhosis* GUT 55:1-12. BMJ Journals. London.
2. Godard L (2012) *Drainage of Abdominal Fluid (paracentesis–Information for Patients)* Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust. Oxford.

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This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we're doing well or if there's anything which we can improve, that's why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

telephone: 01642 624719

Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

freephone: 0800 092 0084

Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883

Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

telephone: 01642 617617

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

telephone: 01642 833551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

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