

Paracentesis

Paracentesis is a procedure to remove excess fluid from the abdomen. When a person collects too much fluid in the abdomen, it is called ascites. Ascites can result from certain conditions, such as chronic scarring of the liver (*cirrhosis*), cancer, heart failure, or infection.

In paracentesis, the fluid is removed using a needle that is inserted through the skin and tissue into the abdomen. This procedure may be done to:

- Find the cause of the ascites.
- Relieve symptoms that are caused by the ascites, such as pain or shortness of breath.

Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthetic medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- Infection.
- Bleeding.
- Injury to an abdominal organ, such as the bowel (*large intestine*), liver, spleen, or bladder.
- Low blood pressure (*hypotension*).
- Mental status changes in people who have liver disease. These changes would be caused by shifts in the balance of fluids and minerals (*electrolytes*) in the body.

What happens before the procedure?



- Ask your health care provider about:
 - Changing or stopping your regular medicines. This is especially important if you are taking diabetes medicines or blood thinners.
 - Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines unless your health care provider tells you to take them.
 - Taking over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.
- Ask your health care provider what steps will be taken to help prevent infection. These may include washing skin with a germ-killing soap.

- A blood sample may be taken to determine your blood clotting time.
- You may have imaging tests.
- You will be asked to urinate.

What happens during the procedure?

- You may be asked to lie on your back with your head raised (*elevated*).
- You will be given a medicine to numb the area (*local anesthetic*) where the needle will be inserted.
- Your abdominal skin will be punctured with a needle.
- A drainage tube will be connected to the needle. Fluid will drain through the tube into a container.
- After enough fluid has been removed, the needle will be removed.
- A sample of the fluid will be sent for examination and testing.
- A bandage (*dressing*) will be placed over the puncture site.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

What happens after the procedure?

It is up to you to get the results of your procedure. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the procedure, when your results will be ready.

Summary

- Paracentesis is a procedure to remove excess fluid from the abdomen using a needle.
- This procedure may be done to find the cause of ascites or to help relieve your symptoms.
- Your skin will be numbed with medicine (*local anesthetic*) before the needle is inserted.
- A sample of the removed fluid will be sent for examination and testing.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.