

Abdominal Drain Procedure

(Paracentesis)

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The aim of this leaflet is to provide information to patients who require an abdominal drain (large volume paracentesis) to relieve symptoms of build up of fluid in the abdomen.

What is ascites?

Ascites is a medical term used to describe the build-up of fluid within the abdomen. In a healthy person there is normally a very small amount of fluid within the abdominal cavity, this is being continuously created and absorbed. Certain illnesses, however, may cause an imbalance in fluid production and re-absorption and may cause the fluid to build up within the abdominal cavity. It occurs commonly in chronic liver disease.

What are the symptoms of ascites?

The abdomen may get swollen and bigger as a result of the fluid build-up. You may feel abdominal pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting due to the increasing pressure of fluid within the abdominal cavity. Other symptoms that you may experience include indigestion, poor appetite, reduced mobility and tiredness.

What can be done about it?

Symptoms can be relieved by removing excess fluid. This can be done by taking drugs called diuretics (most commonly Spironolactone or Frusemide). However, this is not always possible because the diuretics may take too long to start working. They may stop working or they may have unacceptable side effects such as kidney problems. The quickest way to remove the fluid is to drain the fluid using a plastic drainage tube inserted into the abdomen. This procedure is called paracentesis.

What should I do when I think I need fluid draining from my abdomen?

You should ring the **liver helpline 0151 430 1981**. If the nurse is not available to speak to you immediately leave a message and a contact number and they will return your call as soon as possible.

Make sure you have your most recent weight to hand and also any medications you take.

You will be given a date to attend for the procedure. You will have been asked to attend for blood tests in the week prior to the procedure. If you take any water tablets you will be asked to stop these 48 hours before the procedure. If you take blood thinners you may be asked to stop taking these up to 5 days before the procedure.

What will happen on the day of the procedure?

- The procedure will be carried out on **Ward 3D** treatment unit or on the Endoscopy Unit.
- On the day of your procedure, **please arrive on the ward at your agreed appointment time**
- When you arrive you will be seen by the Gastroenterology Nurse Specialist who will ask you a few questions and be able to answer any questions you may have
- For the procedure you will be lying on a bed/ bed trolley
- An intravenous drip will be inserted to give you some albumin (one of the body's proteins) while the fluid is draining
- The nurse will examine you and decide on the best position to insert the drain into your abdomen
- You will be given an injection of local anaesthetic before the drain is inserted
- The drain will be left in place for up to 6-8 hours
- When the drain is removed a dressing will be applied to the area and should be left in place for 48 hours and kept as dry as possible

Do I have to stay in hospital overnight?

- Most patients come to the hospital in the morning of the procedure and go home at the end of the day. The fluid will be drained gradually, so you should expect to be in hospital for at least 8 hours.
- If you become unwell during the procedure an overnight stay will be arranged.

What do I do after the procedure?

- The nurse will give you some blood forms to have your bloods taken a week after the procedure. This is to ensure your body has adjusted to the removal of the ascetic fluid
- The nurse will give you advice on your medications and may change certain doses of tablets to reduce the likelihood of you having to return for a repeat drain.

What are the risks?

- Abdominal drain insertion is a safe procedure. Like any procedure there is a possibility of complications and side effects.
- The most common side effect is a feeling of tiredness after the procedure. Some patients may experience a slight increase in abdominal discomfort.
- Less commonly there may be some leakage at the drain site for up to 72 hours after the procedure. Very occasionally there may be bleeding from the drain site.
- A very rare complication can include the introduction of infection into the abdominal cavity or damage to one of the intra-abdominal organs (e.g. gut, liver, spleen)

What should I do if I have problems after the procedure?

- You may experience leakage from the drain site. If leakage continues 24 - 48 hours after removal of the drainage tube, you should let us know immediately. You may require a small stitch to stop the site from leaking any further which we can liaise within the team.
- Very rarely, people get an infection in the abdominal cavity through the insertion site. Let us know if you feel feverish, unwell or notice any redness, swelling or pain around the site.
- Out of hours - in an emergency please attend A&E.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having an abdominal drain procedure, please contact:

The Liver Nurses on the **Liver Helpline Tel: 0151 430 1981**

Monday to Friday 08:30 am – 16:30 pm

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
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