

# Information for patients and carers

## Paracentesis (Ascitic Drain)



## What is paracentesis?

Paracentesis is the drainage of excess fluid from your abdomen. It is sometimes referred to as an ascitic drain. It is caused by certain conditions such as cancers and liver problems.

The body normally produces a small amount of fluid in the abdomen which helps organs smoothly move alongside each other without friction, normally this fluid is constantly reabsorbed and reproduced by your body. Certain conditions may cause this fluid to build up within your abdominal cavity as there is an imbalance between the production and absorption of this fluid.

Symptoms may include the following:

- Abdominal pain/swollen abdomen
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea and vomiting
- Lethargy
- Poor appetite and indigestion
- Constipation or diarrhea

If you have too much fluid in your abdomen, it may require drainage to help you feel less swollen and to ease any symptoms you may have.

You have been referred by your consultant for this procedure. It is usually performed as a day case visit and involves the doctor/nurse practitioner using ultrasound to insert a small tube into your abdomen to drain the excess fluid.

## Are there any special preparations required before the examination?

You will be contacted by a member of staff from our Interventional Radiology Day Unit (IRDU) by telephone or letter. They will explain the procedure and go through a short questionnaire.

We will need to know what medication you are taking and any medical conditions that you have.

**It is very important that you tell us if you are taking anticoagulants.**

We would normally allow you to take your regular medication but if it needs to be altered, we will discuss this with you.

We may ask you not to eat prior to the procedure. This will be discussed before you attend for the procedure.

## Can I bring a relative or friend with me?

It is important that you bring a friend or relative with you, as you will need someone to drive you home after the procedure and stay with you overnight. Your friend or relative may accompany you to your appointment but will not be allowed into the examination room. They will be asked to wait in the main waiting room, or to return after your procedure.

Please do not drive yourself to this appointment, as you will not be able to drive afterwards. Please arrange for a friend or relative to drive you, or you may need to organise hospital transport by telephoning 0800 032 3240.

Please note that we do not have childcare facilities. Please do not bring small children to the appointment.

If you have any questions, please let us know before your procedure date.

## What happens when I arrive at the x-ray department?

When you arrive, you will check in at the x-ray reception desk before you are taken through to IRDU. The nurse or healthcare assistant who

will be looking after you will check your details and ask you to change into a hospital gown.

Initially an ultrasound scan of your abdomen will be performed to establish whether there is sufficient fluid to drain. The doctor/nurse practitioner will discuss the options for treatment and the risks and possible complications that may occur. They will then ask you for your written consent for drainage and any subsequent treatment.

## What happens during the examination?

You will be asked to lie down on the examination bed.

The doctor/nurse practitioner performing the procedure will then use ultrasound to scan your abdomen to identify the safest point to insert the drain.

The skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and covered with a sterile drape to help reduce the risk of infection.

Local anaesthetic will be administered to numb the skin where the drain will be inserted. Once the anaesthetic has started to work and the area is numb (usually 2-3 minutes), a small incision will be made through which a small tube will be inserted. You may feel pressure and pushing whilst the tube is manipulated into the correct position but should feel no sharp pain.

Once in the correct place the other end of the tube is attached to a bag, which will collect the drained fluid. It usually takes around 3-4 hours to drain sufficient fluid, during this time it is possible for you to sit up and relax in bed. After this time the tube will be removed and the site covered with a small dressing.

## What happens after the examination?

You will be able to go home after the procedure if you feel well enough. It is important a relative or friend accompanies you, and that you do not drive or stay on your own overnight. If this is not possible, you need to make us aware of this so that other arrangements can be made. If the area is sore after a drain removal you may wish to take mild painkillers and you will be supplied with dressings to use if required.

You are advised not to drive for the 24 hours following your procedure. You will be discharged with a letter outlining your treatment and a copy will be sent to your GP.

## Are there any side effects?

The most common side effect is feeling tired after the procedure and an initial increase of pain in your abdomen, due to the drain insertion. You may also experience some leakage from the drainage site for up to 72 hours post procedure.

If you find these side effects are unbearable or not improving, please either contact your GP, specialist nurse, oncology team or IRDU in hours, or if necessary, seek urgent medical attention.

## Are there any risks?

These will be outlined to you by the consultant/nurse practitioner before the procedure, but can include the following:

- Internal bleeding (occurs in less than 1:100 cases)
- Damage to organs within your abdomen
- Leakage of excess fluid from the puncture site for longer than 72 hours post procedure
- Insufficient drainage or blockage of the tube to prevent free drainage
- Infection at the site the drain was inserted or within your abdomen.

This may cause your temperature to rise and you may feel feverish and/or you may notice redness and swelling around the puncture site.

**If you think you may have any of the above associated risks either contact your GP, specialist nurse, oncology team or IRDU in hours, or if necessary, seek urgent medical attention.**

## Contact details

The service offered at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a Monday to Friday service. After your initial referral, you can contact us for advice on your ascites and for any subsequent drains needed.

Should you require any further advice or information please telephone Royal Preston Hospital Interventional Radiology Day Unit on **01772 522343**, between the hours of 8.30am-4.30pm (Monday to Friday).

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

**Follow us on social media @lancshospitals**

**Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.**

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.**

**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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