What you Need to Know About your Paracentesis Catheter

Your doctor recommends that you have a procedure called **paracentesis** to help remove the excess build up of fluid from your abdomen (belly). The build up of fluid in your abdomen is called **ascites**. Ascites fluid that contains cancer cells is called **malignant ascites**. Ascites causes abdominal pain and bloating, and is uncomfortable. If the fluid is not drained, it leads to shortness of breath because of the pressure it places on the diaphragm.

### What can I expect during the procedure?

During paracentesis, we will insert a special “tunnelled” tube, called a catheter, part way under the skin. This thin, hollow tube has a cuff that lays flat on the tissue under the skin, which will act as a barrier to infection and help anchor the tube. This will prevent the tube from moving. The other end of the tube remains outside your body.

After we insert the tube, you and your health care provider will be able to drain excess fluid from your abdomen while you are at home. You do not need to return to the hospital to have a paracentesis procedure once you have this tube in place.

### What can I expect after the procedure?

You will have a bandage over the tube to help keep it clean and prevent infection. On the part of the catheter that sticks out from the skin, you will see a small clamp on the tube and a cap at the end of the tube. The clamp and the cap prevent ascites fluid from leaking.

### How do I drain the ascites fluid at home?

We will arrange home care nursing services to assist in your care. While you are at home, the in-home nurse will assist you to drain a certain amount of fluid every week as instructed by your doctor.

You will have extra paracentesis catheter supplies at home such as bandages, drainage tubing, drainage bags, and catheter caps.

You will collect the ascites fluid in a drainage bag. The bag can hold up to 4 litres of fluid. Your doctor and nurse will determine how much fluid is to be drained.

Use the drainage bag only once with every drainage. Empty the fluid in the toilet and then place the empty bag in your regular garbage.

---

**Figure 1:** Paracentesis Catheter placement.

- **Peritoneum**: The inner lining of the abdominal cavity.
- **Fluid**: The excess fluid that needs to be drained.
- **Tube**: The special “tunnelled” tube inserted under the skin.
- **Fluid drains out**: The excess fluid draining out through the tube.
How do I care for my catheter at home?

Keep the catheter insertion site clean and dry.

• When you take a shower, be sure the bandage is securely covering the catheter.
• If the gauze pads become wet, remove the dressing and make sure to clean and dry the area around the catheter.

Check with your in-home nurse if you have questions.

Contact your nurse or doctor if you have any of the following:

• A fever of 38 °C (100.4 °F) or higher
• Difficulty breathing
• Pain that does not go away even after taking pain medicine
• Abdominal (belly) pain not caused by the procedure
• Bleeding from the exit site around the catheter
• Fluid leaking from the exit site around the catheter (gauze pads and bandages are soaked)
• Swelling of the abdomen (belly)
• Signs of infection at the exit site, such as pain, redness, swelling, warmth, or foul-smelling drainage
• Blood in your urine
• Dizziness, light-headedness, or fainting.

For more information, or if you have any questions about the procedure, please speak to your in-home nurse, doctor, or home care professional.

**Acknowledgements:** This information has been developed by the Central LHIN Regional Systemic Therapy Program Nursing Committee.

© 2022 Humber River Health. All rights reserved.

The information provided in this handout is for educational purposes. It does not replace the advice or specific instructions from your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat. If you have questions about your own care, please speak with your healthcare provider.