**Paracentesis**

Paracentesis, or abdominal tap, is a procedure where we insert a small tube through your abdominal (stomach area) wall to remove fluid from within your abdomen.

**Why do I need a paracentesis?**

Normally, inside your abdomen, there is a small layer of fluid between your organs. This fluid moistens the surfaces of the organs. Some medical conditions may cause too much of this fluid to accumulate in the abdomen. We call this fluid build-up, ascites.

Your doctor may do a paracentesis to help:

- Find out what is causing the ascites (diagnose).
- Relieve symptoms, such as pain and trouble breathing, from the fluid build-up.

Unless we treat the underlying condition causing your ascites, it can return. You may have to undergo this procedure again. In some cases, if we cannot treat the underlying condition, your doctor will recommend you to have a permanent drain inserted.

If the fluid build-up is slow, medicines may help reduce your ascites. Your doctor will review your medical condition to see if this is a good option for you.

**What are the risks to having a paracentesis?**

As with any procedure, there are some risks to having a paracentesis. However, these risks are rare, happening to less than 0.2% (2 out of 1000) patients. Your doctor will review a list of possible complications with you, which may include:

- Injury to an organ or the gut in the abdominal area
- Puncture of a blood vessel (inferior epigastric artery), causing bleeding
- Infection caused by germs entering the body through the puncture site
- Removal of too much fluid, causing low blood pressure and low salt (sodium). This may put strain on your kidney.

You may be at higher risk of these complications if you:

- Are pregnant
- Have a full bladder
- Have an infection in the area where we will insert the paracentesis tube.

Please discuss your potential risks with your doctor before the procedure.
How do I prepare for the paracentesis?

Your doctor will explain the procedure to you. Please ask your doctor any questions that you might have about the procedure. Your doctor will then ask for your permission to do the procedure. Follow your doctor’s or nurse’s instructions on eating or drinking before the procedure.

Based on your medical condition, your doctor may do other tests, such as blood tests or medical imaging tests (X-ray, CT scan, ultrasound, and/or MRI scan).

To prepare for your test, tell your doctor if you:

- Have any bleeding problems.
- Have any past or current medical conditions.
- Have any allergies.
- Are currently taking any medicines, including medicines to thin your blood or prevent clots (acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin® or other brands), blood thinners, or others). Your doctor may ask you to stop certain medicines before the procedure.
- Are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.

How is the paracentesis done?

Generally, the procedure will take about 10 to 30 minutes, depending on how much fluid we need to remove.

You may feel discomfort during a paracentesis, but it should not be painful. Your doctor will try to complete the procedure as quickly as possible to reduce any discomfort or pain.

Before the procedure:

1. You will wear a gown for this procedure. Please take off all clothing (including underwear) and other objects (such as jewelry) that may interfere with the procedure.
2. Empty your bladder before the procedure.

During the procedure:

3. Your doctor may ask you to lie on your back or a different position.
4. Your nurse may put monitors (blood pressure cuff) on you to watch your vital signs.
5. Your doctor will check your abdomen to determine where we will insert the paracentesis tube. We will then clean the skin around this area (the puncture site) to help prevent infection.
6. Your doctor will inject a local anaesthetic into your abdominal skin to numb the area. You may feel a sting for a few seconds, but it will make the paracentesis less painful.
7. Your doctor will carefully insert the paracentesis needle through the numbed skin and into the abdomen where the fluid is located. You will feel some pressure while we insert the needle.

Tell your doctor if you feel short of breath, light-headed, or have severe pain during the procedure.

Please stay very still while we are inserting the needle.
8. Once the needle is in abdominal space, your doctor will remove the fluid using a suction bottle.
   • To find out what is causing the extra fluid, the doctor may only remove a small amount of fluid.
   • To relieve your symptoms, we may remove more fluid to help make you feel better.

At the end of the procedure:
9. Your doctor will remove the needle and cover the puncture site with an adhesive bandage (Band-aid®).
10. If we collected fluid for testing, we will send it to the lab for testing.

Other doctors and assistants may help during the procedure, as needed. They may order or perform all or part of the procedure, using the same care as your original doctor.

What can I expect after the paracentesis?
• You may feel soreness at the puncture site.
• You may be able to eat and drink after your procedure.
• You will not usually need pain medicines for a paracentesis. However, your doctor may order pain medicines for other reasons.
• Your doctor and nurse will monitor your vital signs.
• After you have recovered from the procedure, your doctor will let you know if you need to stay in hospital for other test(s) or treatment(s), or you can go home.

Test Results:
Depending on the tests your doctor ordered on your ascites fluid, results will take anywhere from a few hours to a few days or weeks. The doctor will tell you when to expect the results of your paracentesis.
• If you are still in the hospital once the test results are back, your doctor will explain your results to you.
• If we do not have your results at the time of discharge, we will call you with the test results if they are not normal. You can also sign onto the patient portal, My Humber Health, to view your results. Please make sure we have your correct phone number and email address.

How do I care for myself after the test?

Puncture Site:
You will have an adhesive bandage over the puncture site.
• After 12 hours, you can remove the adhesive bandage from your stomach.

Bathing/Showering:
• You may shower after your paracentesis.
• Do not immerse your puncture site in water. Please wait 48 hours after your paracentesis to take a bath, use a hot tub or whirlpool bath.

If we discharge you from the Emergency Department on the day of your lumbar puncture, please make sure that a responsible person is available to take you home. Do not drive yourself home.
Activity:

• On the day of your procedure, rest as much as possible.
• For the first 2 days, do very light activity. Do not do strenuous activities, such as bending, straining, or lifting anything heavier than 10 pounds.

Diet:

• You may continue to eat and drink as you normally would.

Returning to Work:

• Discuss when you are able to return to work with your doctor.

Contact your family doctor or go to the nearest emergency department if you:

• Have signs of an infection, including:
  • Fever of 38.5°C (101.3°F), or above
  • Severe pain at the puncture site
  • Blood or pus oozing out of the puncture site.
• Have questions, problems, or notice anything unusual that your doctor did not explain.

For more information or help:
Please contact your family doctor or call Telehealth at 1 (866) 797-0000.

Follow-up Instructions:
Visit your family doctor for a follow-up.