Getting Ready for Paracentesis, Thoracentesis or Ultrasound-guided Aspiration

You will have:
☐ Paracentesis  ☐ Thoracentesis  ☐ Aspiration of: ☐ soft tissue  ☐ thyroid  ☐ ____________

What are these procedures?

These are tests and treatments that use a long, thin needle or tube to remove fluid from your body. Pictures from an ultrasound will guide the needle to the right place. (Ultrasound uses sound waves to create pictures of the body on a video screen. You will not feel the sound waves.)

We may remove the fluid to relieve pressure, to test the fluid or both. Paracentesis removes fluid from the belly (abdomen). Thoracentesis removes fluid from the sac around the lungs. Aspiration removes fluid from any part of the body, then the fluid is tested for disease or infection.

How do I get ready?

Tell us in advance if there’s any chance you may be pregnant.

Bring a list of your medicines to the exam. Include vitamins, minerals and over-the-counter drugs. If you’ve had a chest X-ray at a non-Fairview clinic within 24 hours of this exam, bring this as well.

☐ If you take blood thinners, you may need to stop taking them a few days before treatment. Talk to your doctor before stopping these medicines.
☐ Stop taking Coumadin (warfarin) 3 days before your test or treatment. Restart the day after treatment.

☐ You will receive sedation for this test (medicine to help you relax). To prepare:

• See your family doctor for an exam within 30 days of treatment.
• Plan for an adult to drive you home and stay with you for at least 6 hours.
• No eating for 6 hours before your test. You may have clear liquids until 2 hours before test (water, Jell-O, clear broth, apple juice or any non-carbonated drinks that you can see through; no soda pop). You may take medicine with small sips of water.
• If you have diabetes, ask your care team if you should adjust your insulin on the day of treatment.

What happens during the exam?

For aspiration (no sedation): Please arrive 15 minutes early. Treatment takes about an hour.
If you will have paracentesis, thoracentesis or sedation: Please arrive 60 minutes early. Plan to spend at least three hours at the hospital.

We may place an IV (tiny needle) in your vein. If so, you may receive medicine through the IV to help you relax. Or, if you will have paracentesis, we may give you albumin (a type of protein) during your treatment.

When it’s time for your test of treatment:
• You will lie on a table. (Lung patients will sit on a cart and lean over a pillow on a table.)
• We will do an ultrasound to find the safest place to insert the needle.
  – We rub warm gel on your skin. The gel helps us get good pictures during the exam.
  – We gently move a wand (called a transducer) over your skin. The wand sends sound waves through your body.
  – You will not feel or hear the sound waves. The sound waves make pictures on a video screen.
• Next, we clean the skin and numb it with a shot of medicine. You will feel a slight burning as the skin gets numb.
• The doctor gently inserts the needle. (If we are draining fluid near the lungs, the needle goes in through your back.)
  – You may feel some pain or pressure. This only lasts a short time.
  – Fluid drains into a bottle. We may remove just a little fluid for testing, or a lot of fluid for pressure relief. If we remove a lot of fluid, the process may take up to an hour.
  – Lung patients may begin to cough as their lungs expand.
• After we remove the needle, we place a bandage over the needle site. You may need to lie quietly for a while before you go home.
• Lung patients: You will have a chest X-ray before you leave.

Take it easy the rest of the day. You can return to normal activities the next day.

Is it safe?

This exam is almost always safe. We will talk with you about the benefits and risks of having this exam.

How will I feel?

You will feel a little sore at the needle site. You may feel relief from the pressure of the fluid. Lung patients may be able to breathe better.

You may need to have this treatment again in the future. Unless we correct the cause of your fluid build-up, the problem may recur.

You might have a drain tube for a short time. If so, we will tell you how to care for the tube.

When will I know the results?

If we test the fluid, your family doctor (or the doctor who ordered the test) will give you the results at your next visit.

You or your insurer will then receive two bills: one from the hospital and one from the radiologist (X-ray doctor).

Who should I call with questions?

Please call your Diagnostic Imaging Department.