

Thoracentesis/Paracentesis

Patient Information

What is a thoracentesis?

Thoracentesis is a procedure that is done to remove fluid from around the lung.

Why do I need this procedure?

The lung and inside of the chest wall are covered with a thin lining called pleura. The space in between contains fluid. Some conditions may cause extra fluid to develop (pleural effusion) causing breathlessness, pain and coughing. To remove this fluid for testing or to reduce the amount of fluid, a procedure called a thoracentesis is done.

What is a paracentesis?

Paracentesis is a procedure that is done to remove fluid from the abdomen.

Why do I need this procedure?

Inside the abdomen is fluid that lubricates the organs and helps them to glide smoothly over one another. Some conditions may cause extra fluid to develop (ascites), causing abdominal pressure and discomfort. To remove this fluid for testing or to reduce the amount of fluid, a procedure called a paracentesis is done.

What should I expect?

You will be asked to sign a consent form. It is important that you understand the procedure and its benefits and risks. Bring a family member or friend with you, to help with your questions or concerns about the procedure. These procedures are performed in the X-ray department by an Interventional Radiologist (X-ray specialist). Ultrasound imaging guides the doctor to into the exact place to remove the fluid sample.

When performing a thoracentesis, you will be asked to sit either on a chair or on the edge of the bed and to lean forward with a pillow, so that your back is exposed. The Radiologist will give you local anaesthetic and a small cut made into the side of your chest.

A paracentesis is performed with you lying on your back. The Radiologist will give you local anaesthetic and a small cut made into the side of your abdomen. A needle or tube will be inserted under ultrasound control and fluid removed. It usually takes about 15 to 30 minutes to perform these procedures, but this is not an absolute timeline.

What happens after the procedure?

You may be a little sore after the procedure, but your symptoms should gradually start to disappear.

If you are an inpatient or being admitted, you will go to your hospital room where the staff will monitor you. If you are outpatient, then you will return to the unit (Oncology or Same Day Surgery) to recover and then you can go home.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Diagnostic Imaging Department at 416-431-8107 (General campus) or 416-495-2480 (Birchmount campus).
