NHS
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Having an image (CT or ultrasound) guided drainage

This leaflet explains what an image guided drainage is, what happens during the procedure and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

You should have time to discuss your situation with your consultant and the radiologist who will be doing the drainage. You should be happy that you understand what the procedure involves as you will be required to sign a consent form prior to undergoing the drainage.

What is an image guided drainage?

This is a minimally invasive way of draining fluid from your body using ultrasound or CT guidance. The procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic, i.e. you are awake but the skin is numbed.

Why do I need an image guided drainage?

Your other tests, such as ultrasounds and CT scans, have shown an abnormal fluid collection inside your body. There are different reasons to remove this fluid. For instance to find out what it is, to remove it because it is infected or to relieve discomfort/breathing difficulty.

Who has made this decision?

The consultant in charge of your care, following discussions with other specialists. Often, image guided drainage is used as an alternative to surgery, which is much more invasive and therefore riskier.

Who will be performing the drainage?

A radiologist who has undergone specialist training and who regularly performs this and other similar procedures will carry out the drainage.

Where will the drainage take place?

In the CT or ultrasound scan rooms in the X-ray Department of the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

What happens before the drainage?

This depends on whether you are an inpatient or outpatient but you will need to have blood samples taken to make sure your blood clots properly. Blood samples can either be taken in the

hospital's phlebotomy (blood test) department or at your GP's surgery.
Ideally, blood-thinning medication such as Warfarin, Dabigatran, Rovaroxaban, Tinzaparin or Clopidogrel are temporarily discontinued prior to the biopsy. This is not always possible or you may be required to take additional short-acting blood thinners for a few days before. If you are at home and taking any of these medications and have not received instructions to stop them please contact the X-ray Department on 0118 322 8368.
You will be asked not to eat for six hours or drink for two hours before the drainage.
Please take all your normal medication other than those that have been stopped for the procedure.

What happens during the drainage?

You will be asked to undress and put on a hospital gown. You will then be taken into the CT or ultrasound scanning room and asked to lie on the couch. Sometimes, intravenous sedation is administered if you are anxious.
A preliminary CT or ultrasound scan will be carried out. Once the exact needle path has been determined, the radiologist will clean your skin with antiseptic and inject the skin and deeper tissues with local anaesthetic. This will sting briefly before the area goes numb. The radiologist will then insert a needle followed by a guide wire and drainage catheter (small plastic tubes about 4mm in diameter) into the fluid. The fluid will then be sucked out with a syringe and then the drain is usually attached to a bag.

How long will it take?

The whole procedure takes about 20-30 minutes.

Will it hurt?

You will feel stinging as the local anaesthetic is injected. Some people also feel some momentary discomfort from the slight pressure used to push the drain into the fluid collection.

What happens afterwards?

After the drainage, you will be monitored in the X-ray recovery area for a short while before being taken back to the ward.

What are the risks and complications?

An image guided drainage is generally a safe procedure but there are risks and, occasionally, complications. Failure to get the drain in or drain the fluid out (especially if it is too thick to come up the tube) can occur. Very occasionally, bleeding can occur which may need a further procedure to treat it.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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