

Having an ultrasound-guided ascitic drain

This leaflet explains what ascitic 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 own consultant or their team and the radiologist (X-ray specialist) who will be doing the procedure. 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 ascitic drainage?

This is a minimally invasive way of draining fluid from your tummy using ultrasound. 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 ascitic drainage?

Your symptoms or other tests, such ultrasound and CT scans, have shown fluid inside your tummy. There are different reasons to remove this fluid, for instance to find out what it is, what's causing it, or if it is causing difficulty breathing or abdominal pain or swelling discomfort.

Who has made this decision?

The consultant in charge of your care, following discussions with other specialists.

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 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 maybe 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 eat for 4 hours or drink for 2 hours before the drainage. Please take all your normal medication other than those that have been stopped for the drainage.

What happens during the drainage?

You will be asked to undress and put on a hospital gown. You will then be taken into the ultrasound scanning room and asked to lie on the couch. Occasionally, intravenous sedation is administered if you are anxious.

A preliminary 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 3mm in diameter) into the fluid. The fluid will then be drained into a bag.

How long will it take?

The whole procedure takes between about 20 minutes.

Will it hurt?

You will feel stinging as the local anaesthetic is injected. Some people also feel some momentary discomfort as the needles etc enters the tummy.

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 ascitic drainage is generally a safe procedure but some there are risks and occasional complications. Failure to get the drain in or drain the fluid out can occur. Very occasionally bleeding can occur.

Further information

If you have any further information please call Berkshire Imaging or the X-ray Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital 0118 322 8368.

Visit the Trust website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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