

Thoracentesis

Thoracentesis

A thoracentesis is a procedure done to remove extra fluid from the space between your lungs and chest wall. This is called the pleural space.

This procedure may be used to:

- find the cause of extra fluid
- relieve pain
- make it easier to breath
- check for cancer or an infection.

During the procedure, a small needle is used to drain extra fluid.

The procedure will take about 30 to 60 minutes. You will need to stay at the hospital for about 1 hour after the procedure.

Benefits

Benefits of this procedure include:

- uses a small needle and usually has very little pain
- has a short recovery time. You are able to get back to doing your normal activities quickly.

Risks

Risks are rare. Possible risks include:

- bleeding or bruising
- infection
- damage to your liver or spleen
- a collapsed lung. If this happens, a chest tube may need to be inserted to inflate your lung.

Before the Procedure

- Please arrange to have someone drive you home after the procedure.
- Tell your health care provider if you:
 - are taking any prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal or natural products
 - have any allergies
 - have had bleeding or blood clotting problems
 - have had lung surgery or have a lung disease.
- You will have lab work done, such as a blood test.
- You will need to sign a consent form.
- You will wear a hospital gown.
- An intravenous (IV) catheter will be inserted into your arm. It may be used during your procedure to give you medicines, blood, fluid or nutrition.
- You may be asked to go to the bathroom before the procedure.
- Follow any special instructions your health care provider gives you.

During the Procedure

- You will sit on the edge of the exam table and lean forward. Your arms will rest on a bedside table.

(over)

- The radiologist (doctor who specializes in X-ray, MRI and ultrasound) may use ultrasound to find the safest pocket of fluid. He or she will use a marker to mark this area on your skin.
- The radiologist will clean your skin.
- A medicine (local anesthetic) is injected to numb the area.
- The radiologist will use a small needle to take out the extra fluid.

After the Procedure

- You may have a chest X-ray to check for any lung problems.
- You may notice pain or slight bleeding at the needle insertion site.
- You may have a cough.
- You may return to your normal activities.
- Call your health care provider's office for results in 1 to 2 days.

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have any of the following:

- chills or a temperature of 100.4 F or higher
- redness, warmth, drainage or swelling at the needle or puncture site
- increased back pain
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- shortness of breath
- discomfort that does not go away.