



Image guided ascitic drainage

This leaflet explains what image guided 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 image guided ascitic drainage?

This is a minimally invasive way of draining fluid from your tummy using ultrasound scanning to guide the procedure. 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 as 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 or physician associate (PA) 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 (Radiology) at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

What happens before the drainage?

This depends on whether you are an inpatient or outpatient and your risk of bleeding profile. Some patients will need to have blood samples taken to make sure their blood clots properly.

Blood samples can either be taken in the hospital's phlebotomy (blood test) department or at the 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 eat for 6 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 very anxious.

A preliminary ultrasound scan will be carried out. Once the exact needle path has been determined, the radiologist or PA 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 or PA 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 needle or drain 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 completely is occasionally a problem. Very occasionally bleeding in to the wall of the tummy or the tummy itself can occur.

Contacting us

Radiology Department, Tel 0118 322 7991.

Radiology Day Case Unit, Tel 0118 322 8368 (Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm).

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

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

RAD_0034 Dr Matthew Gibson, RBFT Radiology Department, May 2024

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