Paracentesis

Paracentesis is a procedure used to remove fluid from the belly (*abdomen*). Fluid in the belly is called ascites. It is caused by various problems. Some of these are infection, liver disease, and other conditions such as cancer.

The fluid is removed using a needle inserted through the abdominal wall. It is then sent to a lab for study. Examination of the fluid can help find the cause of the fluid buildup. This procedure is also done for comfort in people with cancer or chronic long standing scarring of the liver (*cirrhosis*). It helps by relieving the pressure in the abdomen. This also helps lessen pain and makes breathing easier.

PROCEDURE:

This is a procedure that can be done as an outpatient. You may have to sign a consent form before having the procedure. You should be present one hour minutes prior to the procedure or as directed. During the procedure, the abdomen will be prepped. This is done to clean the area the needle goes in. Novocaine may then be used to numb the skin and tissue where the fluid will be removed. A larger needle will be inserted into the numb area. The fluid removed is then sent to the lab. Some results may be available to you in a couple hours. You will be monitored for a period of time following the procedure. If there are no problems, you should be able to go home shortly after the procedure. Pregnancy and scarring from previous surgeries may make this procedure inadvisable. Advanced pregnancy, previous surgery and obesity may all be reasons this procedure can not be done.

LET YOUR CAREGIVERS KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Allergies
- Medications taken including herbs, eye drops, over the counter medications, and creams
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams)
- Previous problems with anesthetics or Novocaine
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*)
- History of bleeding or blood problems
- Previous surgery
- Other health problems

RISKS OF THIS PROCEDURE

All surgical procedures are associated with risks. Some of these are:

- Injury to an organ or the bowel with the needle.
- Possibility of starting an infection.
- Possibility of spreading cancer cells if this is the cause of the fluid.
- Possible blood pressure problems if fluid build up is large.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed or allowed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Shortness of breath or chest pain.
- Increasing pain or discomfort in your abdomen.
- Increasing swelling in your abdomen.
- New drainage or pus coming from site where fluid was removed.
- Swelling or increased redness from site where fluid was removed.
- You develop an unexplained temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or above.
- Swelling or pain in shoulder or arm.

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