

Ascitic Tap / Paracentesis

www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women

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What is ascites?

Ascites is the collection of fluid in the space around the organs in the abdomen (tummy). There is normally a small amount of fluid present that is continuously being produced and reabsorbed by the body.

However, certain illnesses such as ovarian cancer can cause an imbalance leading to an overproduction of this fluid that the body is unable to fully reabsorb.

What are the symptoms of ascites?

People with ascites may experience some of the following symptoms:

- Swollen abdomen
- Weight gain
- Sense of fullness or bloating
- Abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Indigestion
- Poor appetite
- Tiredness
- Reduced mobility

A doctor may examine you and ask about your recent symptoms. Some tests may be organised such as an ultrasound scan or a CT scan to help see if, or how much fluid has collected in the abdomen.

Ascitic tap / Paracentesis.

If your doctor has recommended that the excess fluid be removed, a procedure called an ascitic tap or paracentesis will be organised for you. Blood tests are required, and please inform your doctor if you are taking blood thinning medications.

An ultrasound of your abdomen will be carried out to decide the best placement for the drain tube. This area will be injected with local anaesthetic. Once the area is numb, your doctor will insert a thin

catheter (tube) into your abdomen, the catheter may be held in place by a dressing. The catheter is then connected to a drainage bag. Some of the fluid drained may be sent away for testing.



Your nurse will monitor how much fluid drains and how quickly. Your blood pressure and other observations will be checked regularly.

Depending on your blood test result, you may need some fluids through a drip. It may take several hours for the fluid to drain. When finished, the drain is removed by your nurse and a dressing is placed over the site.

What happens afterwards?

You may feel dizzy or light headed after the fluid has been drained, please inform your nurse so they may help you to get up and move around slowly.

It is normal for a little fluid to leak into the dressing. Keep the dressing on for 24 hours after removal of the drain.

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If you feel well, you may return to your normal activities, unless otherwise advised by your nurse/doctor.

Call your hospital or clinical nurse for advice if the following occur:

- Monitor your drain site for excess fluid leakage,
- Redness, heat or pain at the drain site
- Monitor for fevers (38c or higher)
- Shaking or chills
- Trouble breathing
- Increased pain in your abdomen
- Feeling dizzy, lightheaded or fainting.

Endorsed 18 February 2021. Reviewed by consumers in development stage October 2020. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this information please send an email RHWfeedback@health.nsw.gov.au