

Abdominal Paracentesis

For people with gynecological cancers such as uterine or ovarian cancers

This booklet will give you information about:

- what an abdominal paracentesis is
- why paracentesis is needed
- how to prepare for the abdominal paracentesis
- what will happen during the procedure
- what happens after the procedure is done
- what to do when you get home
- when to call your health-care team

What is an abdominal paracentesis?



An abdominal paracentesis (also known as “paracentesis “or “abdominal tap”) is a procedure in which a needle is inserted through the skin to remove fluid from the abdomen (tummy area).

Why do I need a paracentesis?



You may need a paracentesis if:

- You feel pain in your abdomen (tummy area) and are very uncomfortable. You may also have trouble breathing, eating or lying down. A paracentesis can lessen your pain and discomfort but only for a short period of time.
- Your health-care team needs to test a sample of the fluid for cancer cells. We will let you know the results and if you need treatment.

Tell your doctor if you:

- take any medications (drugs)
- have allergies to any medications (drugs), including anaesthetics
- have any bleeding problems, like platelet disorders or hemophilia A or B
- take any blood thinning medicines or anti-inflammatory medicines



What happens during the procedure?



- You may be asked to remove the clothing below your waist (pants, skirt, and sometimes your underwear). You will be given a hospital gown to wear that opens in the back. Your clothing will be placed in a plastic bag.
- You will be asked to lie on the examining table during the procedure.
- Using an antiseptic solution, we will clean the area. Your doctor will give you a local anesthetic by inserting a needle into your abdominal (stomach) wall. You may feel a sharp stinging or burning sensation that lasts a few seconds.
- Your doctor may use an ultrasound machine to look for fluid in your abdomen (tummy area).
- Once the area is numb, a longer needle is inserted into the area where there is fluid. You may again feel a sharp pain for a few seconds.
- We use a small tube attached to a vacuum bottle to drain the fluid. You may feel a sense of “pulling” or pressure in your abdomen. We may drain several litres. **Tell the doctor or nurse if you feel faint or dizzy during the procedure.**
- Once all the fluid is drained, we will take the needle out and cover the area with a bandage.
- The procedure usually takes about 30-60 minutes, depending on the amount of fluid and how quickly it drains.

What happens after the procedure?



- We will put a small bandage on the area where we did the paracentesis.
- We will ask you to lie down for 10 minutes. We will give you some juice to drink.
- If you feel okay and can sit up, you can go home.

Are there any risks in having an abdominal paracentesis?



This is normally a safe procedure.

There is a very small chance of:

- lots of leaking at the paracentesis site
- a hole in your bowel, bladder or a blood vessel in you abdomen from the needle
- low blood pressure
- getting an infection at the paracentesis site

What do I need to know when I get home?



- You may remove the tape and bandage after 24 hours and take a shower as usual. Do not take a bath or go swimming until after your abdomen (tummy area) has healed.
- You can take acetaminophen if you feel pain.
- There may be a small amount of leakage. This is normal. You can apply pressure to the area to reduce and help stop the leakage. If you have any concerns, please talk to your health-care team.

When should I talk to my health care team?



Talk to your health-care team, if you have:

- new or worsening pain in your abdomen (tummy area)
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- lots of leakage from the paracentesis site
- a fever

A fever is a temperature reading in the mouth of:

38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time

OR

38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour

Call the Odette Cancer Centre at

416-480-5000

Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If we are closed and you need to speak to a registered nurse about your **symptoms**, please call the After-Hours Telephone Line at

1-877-681-3057



When should I go to the nearest emergency room?



Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you cannot reach your health-care team or if you have:

- lots of bleeding from the paracentesis site
- signs of an infection, which can include having:
 - » a fever
 - » increased pain
 - » swelling
 - » warmth or redness in your abdomen (tummy area)
- severe pain

Odette Cancer Centre
2075 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M5
sunnybrook.ca/odette

Need this information in an accessible format?
Email: patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca

