

Thoracentesis

What is a Thoracentesis?

A **Thoracentesis** is a procedure which is performed to remove fluid surrounding the lung. This fluid is removed for either treatment purposes, if there is an excess of fluid, or in order to run lab tests on the fluid to check for abnormalities.

The fluid is located in the *pleural space*, which is between the *pleura* (lining) of the lung and of the inside of the chest wall. Normally, there is only a small coating of fluid in this space, however, conditions such as heart failure, pneumonia, as well as some types of cancer, may cause excess fluid to develop (*pleural effusion*).

Why is a Thoracentesis Performed?

A **Thoracentesis** may be performed for several different reasons including:

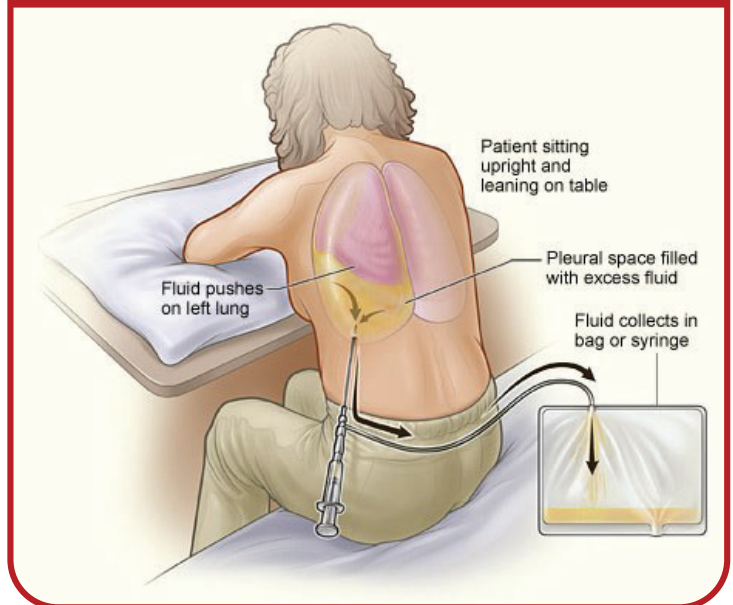
- Pleural Effusion - Fluid will be collected to be tested to determine the cause.
- Infection - Analysis of fluids can help determine if there is an infection present, as well as help your doctor choose the correct medication to treat it.
- Cancer - Cancer can spread to the pleura (lining), which can cause excess fluid buildup. The fluid will be drained and analyzed for the presence of cancer cells.
- Pain - Excess fluid buildup can cause discomfort.

Associated Risks of this Procedure:

As with any medical procedure, there are risks you should know about before you arrive at your doctors office. These include:

- Risk of infection
- Bleeding
- Pneumothorax
- Difficulty breathing
- Pulmonary edema

Thoracentesis is performed to drain fluid from the pleural space for diagnostic or treatment purposes



What Happens During my Procedure?

A chest x-ray may be obtained before the procedure begins. You will be placed into a seated position on the edge of a chair or a bed (see above image), the area of insertion will be sterilized. A local anesthetic will be injected to numb the area, and a needle will be inserted between two ribs in your back. Pleural fluid will then be removed using a syringe or a suction bottle. After the procedure is completed, the needle will be removed and pressure will be applied to stop bleeding.

Your doctor may take an x-ray after the procedure to rule out any complications.

This procedure may take up to an hour to complete.

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Important Things to know Before Your Procedure:

You will be provided with detailed pre-procedural instructions by your healthcare team

- You may have **blood work** obtained prior to the day of your procedure in order.
- Imaging studies, such as: X-ray, ultrasound, and/or a CT will most likely be performed in order to check the location of the *pleural fluid*, as well as check to see if there is an abnormal amount of fluid present.
- You will most likely remain awake throughout this procedure, however, sometime you may be given medication which will cause you to become drowsy. In most cases, you will need to arrange for **either**:
 - Someone over the age of 18 to drive you home **or**
 - Inform our office that transportation assistance is needed.
- Please bring a list of **all home medications** with you on the day of your procedure.
- Please tell your doctor **if you have ANY known allergies to medications**, prior to the day of your procedure.
- Please inform the staff if you have **any symptoms of cold, flu, or any other illness** on the day of your procedure.
- Your doctor will let you know if you need to change the **schedule of your prescription medications** and/or **your diet** prior to your procedure.

What Should I Expect After My Procedure?

You will be provided detailed instructions regarding your care at home, following the procedure.

- It is not uncommon for patients to experience coughing after the procedure is performed. This is normal and will usually resolve within **an hour**.
- Once the needle or catheter is removed, a bandage or dressing will be placed over the site.
 - It is normal for some fluid leakage to continue for the next **3 days**.
 - You will be given additional dressings to change at home every 24 hours until the leakage stops.
- Your doctor may take another imaging study before you go home (x-ray) to ensure that the procedure was done successfully.

When You Go Home:

- This procedure is minimally invasive, you should be able to resume normal daily activities after your procedure.
- You will be notified of any lab results (if any were taken) and your doctor may have you come in for a follow up visit in the coming days or weeks.
- Your bandages may be removed after leakage is no longer present.
 - There may be no leakage, or leakage may persist for up to 72 hours.
 - **If leakage continues after 72 hours, please contact your doctor.**
- Common side-effects of this procedure include:
 - Coughing
 - Chest pressure
 - Discomfort at the site of needle insertion

Contact your doctor if you experience the following:

- Serious or increased difficulty with breathing.
- Severe pain at needle insertion site.
- Fluid leakage for over 72 hours.
- Fever (100° F or above).
- Severe pain, redness or swelling.
- **Chest pain. If not relieved by medication, CALL 911.**