

About Your Outpatient Thoracentesis

What You Need to Know and Do

Thoracentesis is a procedure that removes fluid from the space between your lungs and chest wall. Fluid may have built up in this area because of infection, inflammation, heart failure, or cancer.

Thoracentesis may be done to:

- find the cause of your fluid build up
- relieve any pain or shortness of breath you have because of the fluid build up.

What should I do before my procedure?

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking. It is important for your doctor to know if you are taking any blood-thinning medicines or have a bleeding disorder.

You may need to stop taking all or some medicine before the procedure. This includes:

- all prescription medicines
- blood-thinning medicines (anticoagulants)
- over-the-counter medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen
- street drugs
- herbs, vitamins, and other supplements.

You may eat and drink before the procedure.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, may be pregnant, are breastfeeding, are allergic to any medicines, smoke, or drink alcohol regularly.

We will tell you what time to arrive for your procedure. The time will depend on whether you need any blood tests done before the procedure.

What happens during my procedure?

- Your doctor will use ultrasound as a guide for your procedure. Ultrasound uses sound waves to show images of inside your body.
- The ultrasound will show your doctor where the fluid is.
- Your doctor will clean the area and put a numbing medicine into the skin.
- Your doctor will put a small tube into your chest. The tube will be guided to the area of fluid.
- The fluid will be removed into a bottle.

What happens after the procedure?

- You will have a bandaid placed over your incision site.
- Then you will have a chest X-ray done.
- You can go home afterwards if there are no signs of complications.
- Limit your activity for the rest of the day.
- For 1 or 2 days, don't lift or push more than 10 pounds (about the weight of a gallon of milk).
- If you feel short of breath, call your doctor right away.