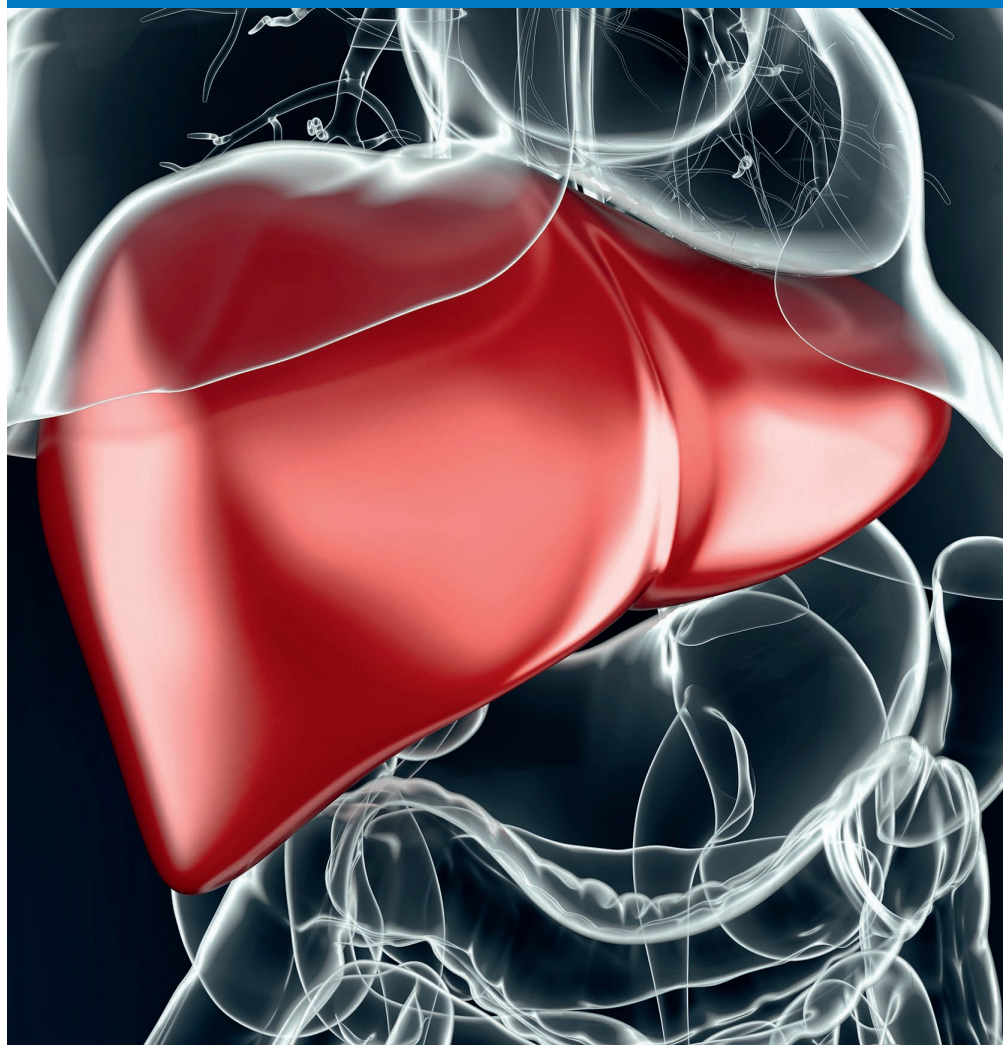


Undergoing an ascitic drain

Information for patients



The Medical Day Case Unit has received a request for you to have drainage of the fluid from your abdomen. This is called paracentesis (or an ascitic drain).

This leaflet will help you to understand what is involved. The procedure requires you to be in hospital for around seven hours; occasionally an overnight stay is required, although this is not usually the case. You should bring overnight clothes and toiletries just in case.

How do I prepare for my drain?

If you are on any medication, you will need to bring this to hospital with you.

We need to know in advance if you are on any tablets that you have been told prevent the blood from clotting or thin the blood. Examples might include warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban, rivaroxaban, dabigatran, edoxaban or dipyridamole, but this list is not complete so please ask us if you are unsure. Aspirin is safe.

Most of these medications have to be stopped before we can safely do a drain in order to prevent bleeding, but the time to stop them varies. If you are on any of these medications please call us on 01623 622515, extension 6494 and we can advise you further.

Please also let your hospital doctor or nurse know if you are taking any water tablets (sometimes called diuretics). Examples include spironolactone, furosemide or bumetanide.

The telephone numbers for this are:

- **Hospital doctor** - telephone 01623 622515 and ask for gastroenterology secretaries.
- **Nurse** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 6494.

You will need to stop these medications the day before your drain and for three days in total.

If you have any queries about your medications, please telephone your hospital doctor or liver nurse specialist on 07425 635990.

The preparation for the drain is as follows:

- On the day of your procedure, you will be asked to attend Clinic 3 for some blood tests.
- You can eat and drink as usual before and after the procedure.
- You will be given a time to arrive at the Medical Day Case Unit and will stay there for around seven hours before going home.
- The doctor or liver nurse will confirm that you understand and agree to the procedure and that you have signed a consent form.

What does paracentesis involve?

Paracentesis is usually performed by the liver specialist nurse, or in some cases a doctor on the ward or a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in x-rays and scans). The procedure is as follows:

- You will be asked to empty your bladder and lie flat on your back.
- An ultrasound machine may be used to locate the fluid and decide on the appropriate site for drain insertion.
- Your skin will be cleaned and a local anaesthetic will be injected into the area where the drain will be inserted. This will sting a little at first, but it will then make the area numb so that you do not feel the drain being inserted.
- The drain will be inserted into your skin, through your abdominal wall and then into your abdomen (peritoneal cavity). This takes around 10 minutes.
- In most cases a cannula (a thin tube) will be inserted into a vein in your arm to give you some fluid (human albumin) to make sure you don't get dehydrated when the fluid is removed from your abdomen.

After the procedure

Following the insertion of the drain, you will be on the Medical Day Case Unit for about four to six hours to allow the fluid to drain away. You will be attached to a drainage bag during that time.

The nurse who looks after you will be checking you regularly until the time when the catheter is removed.

You may get a little discomfort or a dull pain in your shoulders and back, which usually settles with simple pain killers like paracetamol.

Removal of the drain:

- You will be asked to lay flat on your back. The dressing will be loosened and the drain pulled gently out by the nurse looking after you.
- You may be asked to lie on your side, away from the insertion site.
- Pressure will be applied to the tiny hole to stop oozing and we apply a special glue to help skin the stick together and prevent leakage. We will then apply a dressing on top.
- Rarely, the doctor might use one or two stitches to close the site and apply a dry dressing on top.
- Please leave the outer dressing on for at least 48 hours to reduce the risk of infection.
- Please leave any glue alone as it will flake off naturally.
- If you had stitches, these will need to be removed after five to seven days at your GP surgery.
- A responsible adult should take you home and stay with you for at least 24 hours. If you develop a fever or chills, have difficulty in breathing, abdominal pain or tenderness, bleeding, dizziness or severe pain in your chest or shoulder, please call the NHS helpline on 111.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to make the procedure as safe as possible, but complications can happen and some of these can be serious and in rare cases can even cause death:

- **Bleeding** - If this occurs it is usually minor and stops on its own. However, this can become heavy if a larger blood vessel is damaged.
- **Damage to nearby organs** - The risk is lower if a doctor or nurse uses an ultrasound scan to locate the fluid.
- **Low blood pressure** - This can happen when large volumes of fluid are drained. It is usually treated with intravenous fluid. If we know you are at risk of this you will receive a special fluid called albumin while you are having your drain.
- **Leaking fluid** - Occasionally, some people experience leakage from the drain site after the procedure. If this is not stopped by applying pressure or extra padding, please let the department know on 01623 622515, extension 6494.
- **Allergic reaction** - Please let your nurse know about any allergies you have before the procedure.

Contact us:

- **Gastroenterology secretaries** – telephone switchboard on 01623 622515 and ask to be put through to the gastroenterology secretaries.
- **Liver nurse team** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 6494.
- **Medical Day Case Unit** – telephone 01623 622515, extension 2426.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202501-04-UAD
Created: June 2021 / Revised: January 2025
Review Date: January 2027