



# Paracentesis

**You have been recommended to have a paracentesis. This is also known as an abdominal “tap.” This procedure may be needed when fluid accumulates in the abdomen (belly) and causes pain, abdominal distention, and pressure. This buildup of fluid is called ascites.**

## What is a Paracentesis?

A paracentesis is an outpatient procedure done by an interventional radiologist. The radiologist will use a small needle to remove fluid from your belly. A paracentesis can often quickly relieve the symptoms of ascites, but it does not fix the cause as the fluid will come back. However, the procedure can help find the cause of fluid.

## What to expect during the procedure

- Your doctor will clean your belly and put a sterile towel over it.
- Numbing medicine (local anesthesia) is applied to the area where the needle will enter your belly.
- A needle with a plastic tube (catheter) will be put in your abdomen. Some fluid will be removed, then the needle is taken out and the catheter stays in place. The catheter will be connected to tubing that drains the fluid into a bottle. The catheter will be removed once all the fluid is drained.
- A dressing or bandage will be placed over the area where the catheter came out. The fluid that was removed will be sent to the laboratory for testing.
- The paracentesis will take about 30 minutes to perform.

## Risks and complications

Paracentesis is a low-risk and safe procedure. Complications are rare but may include:

- Persistent leakage of ascitic fluid
- Circulatory problems, such as lowered blood pressure
- Localized infection at the puncture site
- Abdominal wall blood clots or bruises
- Bleeding
- Injury to organs in the abdomen

## What will happen after the paracentesis?

- You may notice less tightness around your abdomen, and it will feel less full. You may be able to breathe better which should help you feel more comfortable.
- You may notice some fluid leaking from the area where the needle was placed. This may last for a few days up. Keep the area dry and covered to prevent infection.
- Limit your activity for remainder of the day.
- You may shower 24 hours after your procedure. Take off your bandage and wash the puncture site with soap and water. You may want to place a clean bandage over the area if fluid is still leaking from the site.



### Call your doctor if you have:

- Fever.
- Shortness of breath.
- Redness or skin swelling around where the needle was placed.
- Bleeding or drainage from the area where the needle was placed.

### Additional recommendations:

- Take all your medicines as prescribed.
- Cut back on salt intake to help prevent more fluid buildup. Stay on a low-salt diet and limit your salt to 1,500 to 2,000 mg per day.
- Limit your liquid intake to help prevent the recurrence of fluid buildup. You try to drink less than 8 cups of fluids per day.

### Scheduling your procedure

The paracentesis procedure can be done at following Kaiser Permanente locations:

- Tysons Corner
- Largo
- South Baltimore Medical Center
- Holy Cross Physician Office Building

Make sure to arrive at least 30 minutes before your appointment

### Contact information

**Interventional radiologist scheduling office**  
301-618-7240

### Interventional radiology nursing

- Tysons IR: 703-287-1926
- Largo IR: 301-618-7184
- South Baltimore IR: 410-737-5172