

Ultrasound-guided drainage

Patient information factsheet

What is ultrasound-guided drainage?

- Ultrasound-guided drainage is a procedure to remove unwanted fluid from inside your body using a small tube called a catheter.
- The tube is put through the skin and guided with ultrasound (sound waves) into the fluid. The fluid then drains into a bag to be removed.
- Fluid collections can happen in places like the tummy or chest. They may be caused by infection, swelling, or other medical reasons.

Why do I need to have this procedure?

You may be advised to have an ultrasound-guided drainage if:

- A previous ultrasound or computerised tomography (CT) scan have shown a fluid collection.
- The fluid needs to be removed to relieve symptoms (such as pain or breathing difficulty).
- A sample of the fluid needs to be taken for laboratory tests to help diagnose your condition or plan your treatment.

Benefits of this procedure

- It helps relieve discomfort or symptoms caused by fluid build-up.
- It helps your Doctor make an accurate diagnosis using the drained fluid.
- It usually avoids the need for a larger surgical procedure.

Before the procedure

Preparation

- You will usually be admitted to a hospital ward before the procedure.
- Your Nurse will ask about your health and current medications.
- Blood tests may need be done to check how well your blood clots.

- Blood clotting is the process your body uses to stop bleeding when you get a cut.
- We need to know how well your blood clots so that we can reduce the risk of bleeding.
- You may be told to stop taking blood-thinning medicines (e.g. aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel, rivaroxaban) for a short time before the procedure. Your Doctor will advise you on this

Consent

- The Radiologist (ultrasound Doctor) will explain the procedure and answer your questions before you sign a consent form.
- This confirms that you understand the procedure and agree to it.

During the procedure

- You will lie on a bed or couch in the ultrasound or radiology department.
- The skin in the area will be cleaned with antiseptic and covered with sterile cloths (drapes).
- A local anaesthetic will be injected to numb your skin, and you may feel a sting.
- Using ultrasound images on a screen, the Doctor will guide a needle into the fluid.
- A fine wire will be passed through the needle, and then the drain tube (catheter) will be placed into the fluid collection.
- The tube is secured with a dressing and connected to a drainage bag to collect the fluid.
- This takes around 30 to 60 minutes but may vary depending on the situation.

After the procedure

- You will be monitored on the ward for a short time.
- Your blood pressure, pulse, temperature, and the drain site will be checked regularly.
- You may have some discomfort, bruising or minor soreness where the drain was placed. Pain relief can be given if needed.
- Your Nurse will record how much fluid is draining and how much you drink.
- Depending on what your body needs, the drain might be taken out before you go home, or it might stay in for a while if fluid is still coming out.

Possible risks and complications

Ultrasound-guided drainage is generally safe, but like any procedure, there are some risks:

- Bleeding or bruising at the insertion site.
- Infection where the drain enters the skin. You may need to take antibiotics.
- The drain might not remove all the fluid, or fluid could build up again.
- In rare cases, the drain may fall out, leak, or need repositioning.
- Very rarely, injury to nearby organs can happen.

If you have concerns, speak with your healthcare team.

Going home

- If you are well and the drain has been removed, you can often go home the same day or after a short stay.
- If the drain stays in, your care team will show you how to look after it at home.
- They will also tell you when to come back to have it taken out.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry. You can shower but avoid baths until it has healed.
- Avoid heavy activity until your healthcare team advises.

When to seek help

Contact your GP or attend the Accident & emergency department if you develop:

- Increasing pain at the drain site, redness or swelling.
- Fever or chills (temperature).
- Excessive bleeding, leakage around the drain, or if the drain falls out.

Your results

If fluid has been sent for laboratory testing, your Doctor or Specialist Nurse will let you know how and when you will receive the results.

Contact our service

For questions about your appointment at the Imaging Department please contact us on 020 7288 5888 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm).

For any other questions, please contact the service who referred you to have this procedure.

Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net.

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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