Thoracentesis in Ultrasound

Your local doctor has scheduled a thoracentesis to be done in Ultrasound on ______________ at _______ ( ) am ( ) pm. Please report to the G3/3 Radiology desk (Atrium elevators to the 3rd floor).

This handout explains what you can expect. Our doctors will explain the procedure, and ask you to sign a formal consent.

Why do I need a Thoracentesis?
Your doctor has found that you have fluid around your lung. This is a problem that can occur for many reasons.

Normally, there is no fluid around your lungs and your lungs can fill with air (inflate) fully without a problem. When fluid builds up between your chest wall and lungs, it pushes on your lungs so that they do not inflate properly. By removing the fluid, your lungs can once again fully inflate with air.

A thoracentesis is also done to find out why fluid is building up within the chest. A small sample of fluid can be removed for testing. This sample helps the doctor to figure out what may be causing the fluid build-up.

What are symptoms of fluid around the lungs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Symptoms</th>
<th>Later Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trouble breathing</td>
<td>Rapid/very difficult breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coughing on and off</td>
<td>Hacky cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tight feeling in chest</td>
<td>Feeling of doom or anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chest pain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do I prepare for a thoracentesis?
1 You need to have blood work done before your procedure. This tests how well your blood clots. This can be done the day of the procedure. Please have all outside lab work faxed to Ultrasound Nursing Coordinator Office (608) 890-9122. The blood work includes a platelet count and an INR.

2 If you currently take regular aspirin 325mg (baby aspirin 81 mg daily does not need to be stopped), Coumadin, Plavix®, or any other blood thinners, stop taking them 3-5 days before your thoracentesis. An Ultrasound nurse will call you to confirm and help you make plan. We will check with your local doctor to make sure this is okay.

3 Tell us if you have allergies to latex, contrast dye, or medicines.
What should I expect during a thoracentesis?
The doctor uses an ultrasound (a machine that sends sound waves through the skin and creates images on a TV screen) to find the fluid. Most times, the fluid is drained from the middle back or side. Your skin is cleaned with soap at the site the doctor decides is best to drain the fluid.

Numbing medicine is injected under the skin at this site to help with pain. A small needle is inserted into the fluid. After this, a small tube is placed and the needle is taken out. The fluid is drained out through the tube with a syringe.

At the end of the procedure, you may cough as your lungs start to fully inflate again. This can last for an hour or so after the fluid is removed. You should keep a dressing or Band-Aid® on the site for the next 24 hours.

You may have a chest x-ray after the procedure. The chest x-ray is taken to see if you have a buildup of air outside the lung. This is a rare, but may need further attention.

After the local anesthetic wears off, you may feel slight pain at the site. Your pain should not be severe, but patients have described it as mildly sore. No medicines are prescribed for the soreness. If you have soreness, we suggest the use of Tylenol®. The soreness should go away within the first 24 hours.

What can I do after the procedure?
You can go back to your normal routine as you are able. You should call your local doctor if you begin to have early symptoms of fluid buildup again. Sometimes, the fluid will build up again, and you may need to have another thoracentesis.

When do I call the doctor?
- If you feel dizzy, faint or light-headed.
- If your pain around the site gets worse rather than better 2-3 days later.
- If you are not feeling well and have a fever greater than 100.4°F (38°C).
- If you develop redness and swelling around the site.

Important
If you have shortness of breath, or cannot catch your breath, or have a persistent cough with or without the presence of blood, you need to go the nearest emergency room.

Phone Numbers
Any questions or concerns you may have about your procedure please call 1-800-323-8942.
This will give you the paging operator. Ask for the Ultrasound Department. The operator will then connect you to someone in our department who can help.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2016 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6430