

Thoracentesis

About the procedure

Thoracentesis is a procedure to remove fluids from the area around your lungs. It is a diagnostic test. In some cases, the procedure is done to relieve breathing problems. Your doctor may remove 1 ounce to 2 quarts (30 milliliters to 2 liters) of fluid during the procedure.

Preparation

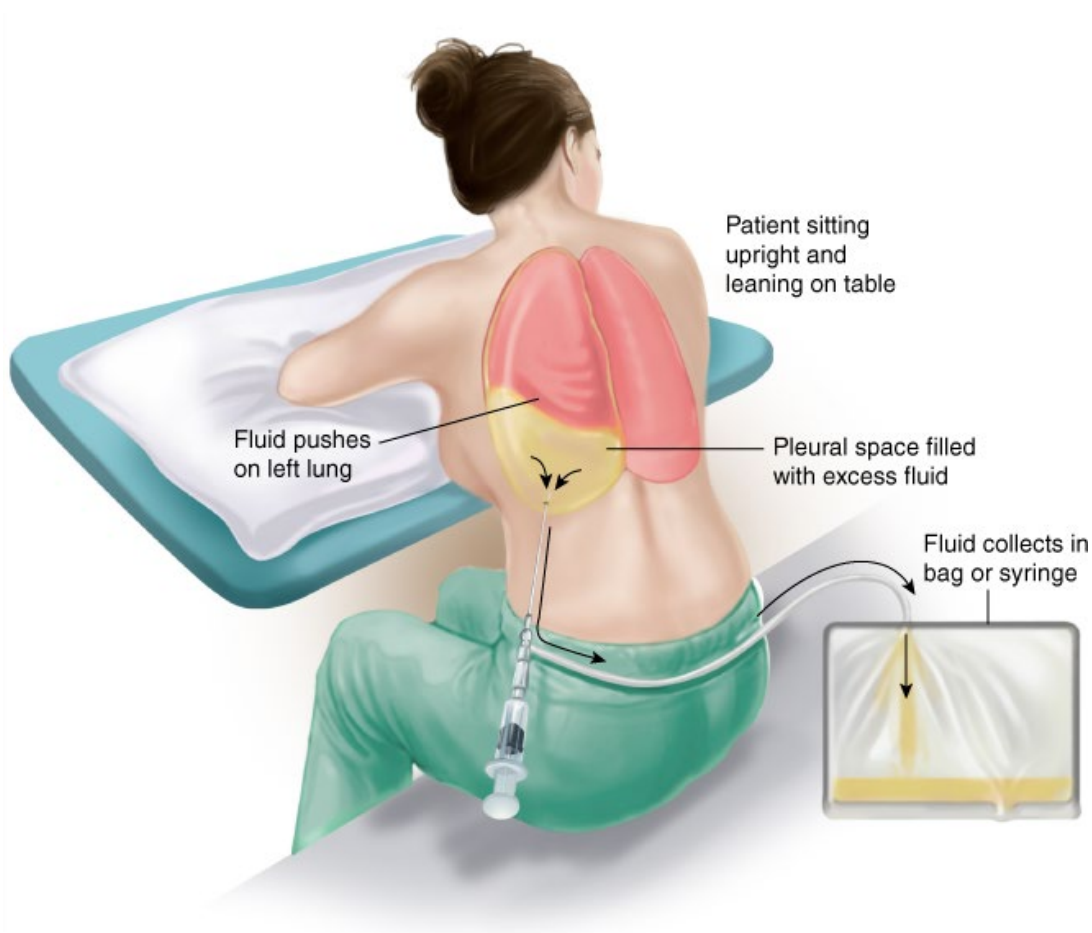
You do not have to fast for this procedure. You may have a small meal the day of the procedure. Tell your nurse if you are taking blood thinning medicines such as aspirin, clopidrogel or warfarin. Some medicines may need to be stopped several days before the procedure. Your doctor will let you know. You may also have a chest x-ray before the procedure.

Tell your doctor if you've had an allergic reaction to chlorhexidine, iodine solution or a local anesthetic such as lidocaine.

Procedure

- The procedure will take about 15 to 30 minutes to complete.
- An ultrasound machine will be used to locate the site of the fluid.
- This area will be clean with an antiseptic solution.
- Anesthesia is used to numb this area and make you comfortable for the procedure. You will feel a stinging sensation from the injection.
- A longer needle (plastic catheter) will be used to enter your chest area where the fluid has collected. The fluid is drained into a bottle, bag or syringe.
- The needle is then removed. A bandage will be applied over the injection site. You may remove it after 24 hours.

You will be awake during the entire procedure. You will be able to talk with your doctor. You may experience some coughing during the procedure. This is normal. Let your doctor know if you have any discomfort. After the fluids have been removed, you will be able to breathe more easily.



Source: McKean S, Ross JJ, Dressler DD, Brotman DJ, Ginsberg JS: *Principles and Practice of Hospital Medicine*: www.accessmedicine.com

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After the Procedure

You may have an additional chest x-ray. This will check if your lung has re-expanded and will ensure that the needle did not injure your lungs.

Some coughing and discomfort during and after the procedure is expected, especially if a large amount of fluid was removed. This is due to your lungs expanding while the fluid was removed. Tell your doctor about any changes with your breathing or if you have any discomfort.

You may still have fluid leakage for up to 72 hours (3days) after your procedure. If you don't have leakage, you can remove the bandage off in 24 hours. If leakage continues more than 72 hours, call your doctor or nurse.

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Discharge Instructions

Call your doctor if you:

- Have increasing chest pain
- Are coughing up blood
- Have shortness of breath
- Have a fever temperature greater than 101°F (38.3°C)
- Have pain that does not get better after taking pain medicine
- Signs of infection at the incision site. These include increased pain, redness, swelling or warmth
- Fluid drainage from the incision site

Some coughing and discomfort during and after the procedure is expected, especially if a large amount of fluid was removed. This is due to your lungs expanding while the fluid was removed. Tell your doctor about any changes with your breathing or if you have any discomfort.

Follow Up

You will be scheduled for a follow up appointment with your doctor 2 weeks after your procedure.

Emergency Center

In case of any emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency center. *For non-emergencies during business hours, call our triage line at 904-202-7300 option 3 then option 3 again.*

Reviewed 2/26/2020