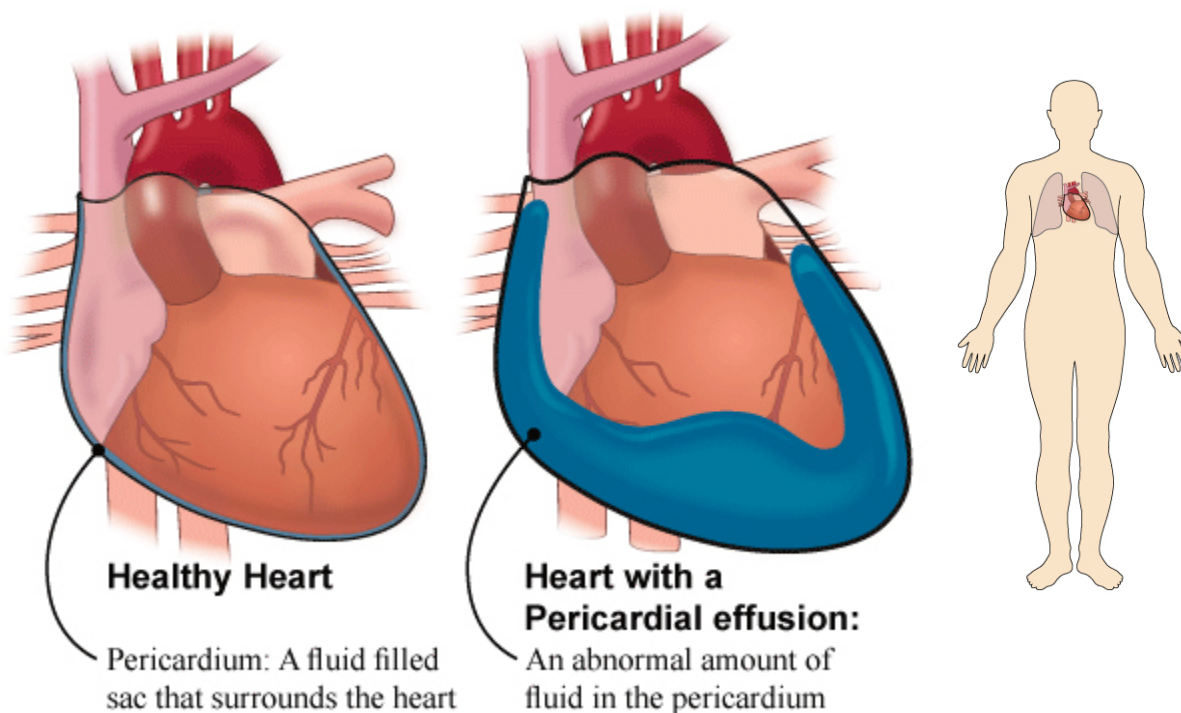


# Pericardiocentesis (Pericardial Tap)



UHN

## Information About Your Procedure



**Healthy Heart**

Pericardium: A fluid filled sac that surrounds the heart

**Heart with a Pericardial effusion:**

An abnormal amount of fluid in the pericardium

### What is a pericardiocentesis?

Pericardiocentesis is a very safe procedure that is done to remove excess fluid that has built up in the sac around your heart. This excess fluid is also called pericardial effusion.

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## **Why do I need to have this procedure?**

The excess fluid around your heart can:

- Make it difficult for you to breathe
- Make it difficult for your heart to beat properly
- Make you uncomfortable

To help you breathe better, to make your heart function better, and to make you feel more comfortable, the doctor will remove this excess fluid from around your heart.

## **How will I be prepared for this procedure?**

### **Before the pericardiocentesis**

- A pericardiocentesis is usually done in our procedure room or at your bedside. You will need to lie on your back for this.
- Your doctor will do a special ultrasound of your heart to see how much fluid is around your heart, and to decide if you need to have this procedure.
- If you need to have the procedure, your doctor will explain it to you and your family, as well as the reasons why a pericardiocentesis is right for you. This is a good time to ask any questions that you may have.
- When you are sure you understand why you need a pericardiocentesis and feel comfortable in having the procedure done, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

### **During the pericardiocentesis**

- To start, the area of your chest just beneath the breast bone will be cleaned with a special liquid.
- Your doctor will then “freeze” or numb the area using special medication. Some patients feel anxious when having this kind of procedure done. If you feel anxious and would like something to relax you, tell your doctor.
- The area will be covered with a sterile towel, so it is important that you keep your hands at your sides.

- A plastic tube (drain) is inserted into the area around the heart where the fluid is. You will feel some pressure when the tube is going in, but it should not hurt. If you feel pain, tell your doctor and he will give you some more “freezing”.
- Once the drain is in the right place, the doctor will use a syringe to remove some of the fluid from around the heart.
- Samples of the fluid will be sent to the laboratory for testing. This will help us to find out what caused the fluid to collect around your heart.
- The drain is then connected to a collection bag so that the remaining fluid can drain slowly. The tube is held in place with stitches, and a dressing is placed over the area.

### **What will happen to me after the procedure?**

- You should start feeling better once some of the fluid is removed from around your heart.
- The drain is left in place for 1 or 2 days. You may have pain at the area once the “freezing” wears off. If you have pain, tell your nurse and you will be given medication to take the pain away.
- You should not touch or tug at your dressing, or at the drain. Ask your nurse if you need help when moving in bed. You should also keep the dressing dry at all times.
- To make sure that all of the fluid has stopped draining into the collection bag, your doctor will do another ultrasound of the heart to make sure that all the fluid is gone.
- If there is no more fluid remaining, your doctor will remove the drain, and cover the area with a small dressing.
- When the drain is taken out, there will be a tiny hole left at the site. This will heal on its own.

### **What if I have questions about pericardiocentesis**

Remember, your safety and comfort is important to us, so please let your doctor and nurse know how you are feeling.