

Preparing for Your Paracentesis

Information for patients and families of the UHN Liver Clinic

Reading this handout can help you learn what to expect before, during and after your paracentesis.

If you have any questions, please speak with your Liver Doctor, Nurse Practitioner (NP) or the Liver Clinic Nurse.



What is a paracentesis?

- Paracentesis is a procedure to remove fluid from your belly. It is commonly called a “tap”.
- You may need a tap to relieve pressure from a build-up of fluid in your belly or to take a small amount of fluid for testing.

Why does fluid build-up?

- Health problems, such as liver damage, can cause your body to build up too much fluid. When the fluid is in your belly, it is called ascites.
- As the extra fluid builds up, your belly swells.

When do I need a tap?

You may need a tap when your belly becomes really swollen and it makes you:

- Uncomfortable (for example, you have difficulty bending over or turning while in bed)
- Have difficulty breathing
- Unable to eat

If you have these symptoms, call your UHN Liver Doctor or NP.
Do not wait for your symptoms to get worse. You will be given an appointment for a tap within 1 to 2 business days. You do not need to go to the Emergency Room.

When will I have the tap?

You will be given an appointment for your tap. Your tap will be done at one of these locations at Toronto General Hospital:

- Medical-Surgical Day Unit – 2F Norman Urquhart Wing
- Liver Clinic Procedure Room – 13F Norman Urquhart Wing



Call 911 or go to a hospital Emergency Room (ER) if you have:

- Fever – a temperature higher than 38°C (100.4°F) with chills or shakes
- Confusion
- Severe pain in your chest or belly
- Shortness of breath

If symptoms get this severe, a tap can be done as an emergency procedure.

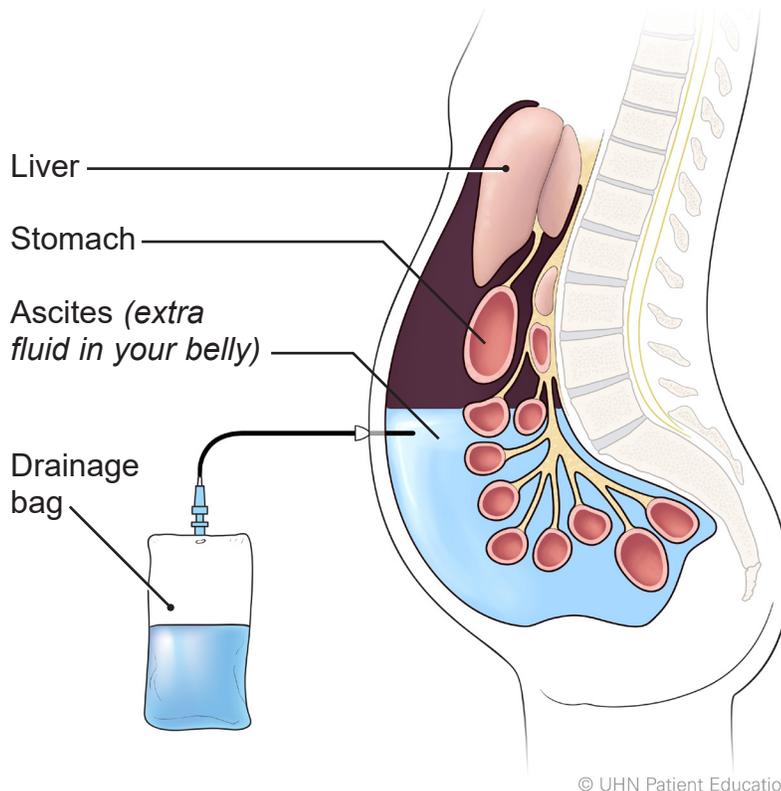
If you are going to a UHN Emergency Room during business hours, also call your Liver Doctor or NP. They may be able to see you in the ER.

What happens before the tap?

- When you arrive for your tap, the doctor, nurse or nurse practitioner will explain the procedure, including the risks and benefits. They will ask you to sign a consent form, saying you understand the risks and agree to have it done.
- You will be asked to go to the bathroom and empty your bladder. Then, you will lie down on a bed or stretcher. Your temperature, heart rate, breathing and blood pressure will be checked.
- An intravenous line (IV) may be put into a vein in your arm.
- You may have an ultrasound scan of your belly to find the safest place to do the tap.

What happens during the tap?

- Your belly will be cleaned with a special soap and covered with sterile drapes. An opening in the drapes is placed over the area chosen for the tap.
- The doctor, NP or nurse will inject a numbing medication (local anesthetic) into the skin where the tap will be done. This may sting as it begins to work.
- The tap is done with a special needle that has a thin tube inside, called a catheter. The doctor, NP or nurse will carefully insert the needle and catheter through the numbed skin into your belly. You may feel some pressure, but not pain. If it is painful, tell the doctor or nurse.
- The needle is removed, leaving the catheter in place.
- Fluid drains out through the catheter. A small sample of fluid will be taken for testing. If more fluid is going to be removed, the catheter will be connected to a drainage bag.



- If a lot of fluid is drained, you may be given a blood product called albumin through your IV. This protects your kidneys from the shock of removing a lot of fluid.
- When the drainage is done, the catheter is taken out.
- Pressure is applied to the tap site until it has closed. Then a dressing or bandage is placed over the area.
- Your temperature, heart rate, breathing and blood pressure will be checked again.
- If you are feeling well, your IV will be removed and you can go home.

How long does it take?

- A tap to remove fluid and relieve pressure takes 1 to 3 hours.
- A tap to take a sample of fluid takes 30 minutes to 1 hour.

How will I feel after the tap?

- You will feel more comfortable when the fluid is removed. You may find it easier to breathe and move.
- The tap site may feel sore or tender.

What happens after the tap?

- You can resume your usual activities if you feel well.
- Continue to follow your Liver Doctor or NP's instructions to manage your ascites. This may include:
 - Limiting the amount of salt (sodium) in your diet
 - Limiting the amount of fluids you drink
 - Taking your medications as prescribed
- Do not bath or shower and leave the dressing or bandage on for at least 24 hours.

If there is leaking:

- Lay down with the tap site pointing upwards
- Remove the dressing or bandage. Put pressure on the site with gauze.
- When the leaking has stopped, put a new bandage over the site.

When should I call the doctor, NP or nurse?

After your tap, call your Liver Doctor, NP or the Liver Clinic Nurse if you notice ANY of these symptoms:

- Fever (a temperature higher than 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- Severe belly pain
- More redness or tenderness in your belly
- Bleeding or difficulty stopping leakage from the tap site

If your symptoms become severe, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Will I need another tap?

- If liver damage is causing your ascites, fluid will build up again and you will need another tap.
- The amount of salt (sodium) in your diet affects how fast the fluid builds up. By following a low-sodium diet, you can increase the time between taps.

Important!

Less salt = More time between taps!

A low-salt diet is very important part of managing your ascites.

Your health care team will:

- ✓ Tell you how much sodium you can have a day. This is usually less than 2000 mg.
- ✓ Help you learn how to buy, prepare and serve foods with little or no sodium.
- ✓ Give you printed information about a low-salt diet.

UHN Liver Clinic Contact List

Liver Specialists (Hepatologists and Clinical Associates)

- Dr. Morven Cunningham Phone: 416 340 3929
- Dr. Navjot Deol Phone: 416 340 4548
- Dr. Jordan Feld Phone: 416 340 4584
- Dr. Scott Fung Phone: 416 340 3893
- Dr. Aliya Gulamhusein Phone: 416 340 3631
- Dr. Harry Janssen Phone: 416 340 3569
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- Dr. Keyur Patel Phone: 416 340 3312
- Dr. Hemant Shah Phone: 416 340 4946
- Dr. Morris Sherman Phone: 416 340 4756
- Dr. David Wong Phone: 416 340 3279
- Dr. Florence Wong Phone: 416 340 3569

Clinic Nurse Practitioners

- Colina Yim, NP Phone: 416 340 3834
- Elizabeth Lee, NP Phone: 416 340 5183

If you cannot reach your Liver Doctor or Specialist, please try:

Liver Clinic Procedure Room Nurse

- Phone: 416 340 3667

Liver Clinic Coordinator

- Phone: 416 340 4868 option 1

Technical Procedures Assistant/FibroScan Technician

- Phone: 416 340 4800 extension 5694



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