

## **What is paracentesis?**

Paracentesis is the removal of fluid from the abdomen caused by [ascites](#).

## **Why would a doctor recommend paracentesis?**

Ascites is a condition where fluid builds up in the abdomen. It is usually caused by liver disease, such as [cirrhosis](#) of the liver, and is a serious condition.

Paracentesis can find the cause of ascites by removing a sample of the abdominal fluid for laboratory analysis. This is called **diagnostic paracentesis**.

Paracentesis is also used to drain large amounts of fluid from a patient's abdomen, in an effort to reduce the effects of ascites when other methods of treatment have not been effective. This draining is called **large volume paracentesis**.

## **What does paracentesis involve?**

In both diagnostic and large-volume paracentesis, the doctor first numbs the skin with a local anesthetic. He or she then inserts a needle through the abdominal wall, and 1 to 2 inches into the abdomen. In some cases, the doctor may use ultrasound to find the location of the abdominal fluid. You may feel some pressure as the needle is inserted.

In diagnostic paracentesis, the doctor only removes a small amount of fluid, which is then sent to a laboratory for tests. In large-volume paracentesis, the doctor drains all, or a portion, of the fluid in the abdomen into a vacuum bottle. In severe cases, the fluid will need to be removed in several sessions, with about a gallon being removed per session.

Once the drainage is completed, the needle is removed, and a dressing is applied to the puncture site.

This procedure usually takes about 20 to 30 minutes, but may take longer if a large amount of fluid is being removed.

## **How long is the recovery after paracentesis?**

You may resume normal activities after the procedure unless your doctor tells you otherwise. For a few days, you may notice some clear fluid draining from the needle site, especially if a large amount of fluid was drained.

The treatment may need to be repeated periodically for patients with large accumulations of ascitic fluid.