

Thoracentesis

WHAT TO EXPECT

A thoracentesis is a minimally invasive procedure performed to remove excess fluid or air from the pleural space, the area between the lungs and chest wall. A thin needle is inserted into the pleural space to access this area. The goal is to drain the fluid in order to make it easier for you to breathe, and/or to find the cause of the fluid buildup.

BEFORE THE TEST

- The sonographer, nurse, and/or radiologist will speak to you before the test and address any questions or concerns that you may have.
- You will need to sign a consent form giving us permission to perform the procedure.
- You may have an intravenous line (IV) inserted.

DURING THE TEST

- You will be either sitting in a chair or lying on a table, in a way that allows the radiologist to access the pleural space. Your skin will be cleaned and prepped with a sterile solution.
- The radiologist will use an ultrasound to confirm the area where the needle is to be inserted.
- Localized anesthetic (i.e. freezing) will be used on your skin to numb the area where the needle goes in.
- The needle and/or tube will be inserted between your ribs and into the pleural space. The radiologist may continue to take pictures with the ultrasound throughout the test to ensure proper placement of the tube.
- The excess fluid is drained out. You may feel some discomfort and pressure during this process.
- You may receive pain medication throughout the exam at the discretion of the radiologist.
- The test lasts between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

AFTER THE TEST

- If necessary, you will go to a recovery area for monitoring. Sometimes, additional imaging (i.e. Chest X-rays) may be done while you are recovering.
- You can go home once the nurse tells you it is safe to leave. If you received any medication during the procedure:
 - You will be discharged with an adult friend or family member that is taking you home.
 - You cannot drive or operate machinery for the next 24 hours.
 - You should have an adult friend or family member stay with you for 24 hours after your test.
- You must see your referring doctor for the test results.

If you develop unexpected symptoms (including but not limited to: fever, severe pain, coughing up a lot of blood, increased redness or tenderness in the area, bleeding from the site), call your doctor and/or go to the Emergency Department right away.