

Gastroenterology

Indwelling abdominal drain

You are receiving this information because you have recurrent fluid accumulation in your abdomen. This is a condition known as ascites. This is often caused by liver scarring, but can also accompany other conditions, such as your heart not pumping efficiently. Other methods, like medication or repeat drainage may not be suitable for you.

If fluid rapidly re-accumulates after repeated drainage procedures, where a fine plastic catheter has been inserted to remove fluid, there is the option of a tunnelled or semi-permanent drain, which can be inserted and left in place.

The tunnelled drain is a plastic drainage tube that is inserted once and remains inserted. The end of the drain remains outside of the body, which is hidden under a dressing when not in use. When fluid re-accumulates, a special drainage bottle is temporarily attached to withdraw the fluid at your convenience.

Where does the procedure take place?

The procedure will take place in the radiology department, where ultrasound or x-ray equipment is used to guide the insertion of the catheter.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

You will need to be admitted to the hospital, either as a day case or for an overnight stay.



Patient Information

For a morning procedure: Please do not eat or drink anything after midnight. You can drink water up to 4 hours before the procedure.

For afternoon admissions: You may have a light breakfast but please do not eat anything after 6am. You can still drink water for up to 4 hours before the procedure.

Take your medicines as normal, with a sip of water, unless your doctor or nurse tells you not to. Inform your doctor if you have any allergies.

If you are taking Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Aspirin or any other blood thinning medication and have not been advised when to stop them, please discuss this with the team who suggested the drain or contact the hepatology specialist nurses on 024 7696 7123 (between 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday).

How is a tunnelled abdominal drain inserted?

Before the procedure, the radiologist will explain the procedure, discuss risks and ask you to sign a consent form. You can ask any questions that you have.

You will be asked to wear a hospital gown. A small thin tube called a cannula will be placed into a vein in your arm and this can be used to give you a sedative or painkiller if needed. You will be monitored throughout the procedure and given oxygen if needed.

Your skin will be cleaned, and the doctor will inject the skin with a local anaesthetic, which may sting when injected, but this will numb the skin. You may feel some pressure in your abdomen after that, but you should not feel pain. The doctor will insert a needle and then a tube over this into the abdomen and it will be tunnelled under the skin. The end will then be coming out of your body and be stitched into position. The exact location of this will vary but you can ask as to where it is likely to be in your case. The stitches will be removed after 14 days. A dressing will be placed over the drain, but it will still be free to be connected at the end.

Patient Information

If you experience discomfort during the procedure, let the doctor know, and they can provide you with some painkillers.

The procedure usually takes around 30 minutes to complete.

Risks

As with any procedure, there are possible risks or complications, such as:

- Abdominal discomfort, especially just after the procedure once the local anaesthetic has worn off. Over the counter pain killers should improve this.
- Bleeding at the drain site at the time of insertion. This usually does not require any treatment but can cause bruising.
- Infection at the drain site or inside the abdomen. If this develops, you will be given antibiotics. If the infection does not improve, the drain may need to be removed.
- Perforation (causing a hole in a surrounding structure). This is very rare but if occurs, it may require antibiotics or surgery.
- The catheter falling out or becoming blocked. In this case, it may need to be replaced.

How do I use the tunnelled catheter once it is inserted?

You will be shown or given assistance by the district nurses to connect the drainage bottle. Please speak to your doctor about how often this is needed and they will give you clear instructions. Drainage normally takes around 15 minutes, and you will dispose of the bottle afterwards. The catheter is then covered with a discreet protective dressing. Each time you need drainage, a new bottle should be connected.

Patient Information

How things appear underneath the dressing....



When dressed:

When you decide to drain, simply remove the outer dressing, connect the bottle, switch on the vacuum and fluid will drain.



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The district nurses will arrange for collection systems (bottle or bag, if using other system and fluid to be collected by the council once a week.

What if I have problem at home?

If you are in severe pain or are concerned, please attend your nearest emergency department.

Patient Information

For non-urgent issues, contact your district nurse or contact our hepatology nurses at 024 769 67123 between 8am and 4pm (Mon-Fri). Outside of these hours, contact ward 32 at 024 7696 7831.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6191 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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