

## **Department of Gastroenterology**

### **Abdominal Drain Procedure**

### **(Paracentesis)**

### **Patient Information Leaflet**

**The aim of this leaflet is to provide information to patients who require an abdominal drain to relieve symptoms of build up of fluid in the abdomen**

### **What is ascites?**

Ascites is a medical term used to describe the build-up of fluid within the abdomen. In a healthy person there is normally a very small amount of fluid within the abdominal cavity, this is being continuously created and absorbed. Certain illnesses, however, may cause an imbalance in fluid production and re-absorption and may cause the fluid to build up within the abdominal cavity. It occurs commonly in chronic liver disease.

### **What are the symptoms of ascites?**

The abdomen may get swollen and bigger as a result of the fluid build-up. You may feel abdominal pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting due to the increasing pressure of fluid within the abdominal cavity. Other symptoms that you may experience include indigestion, poor appetite, reduced mobility and tiredness.

### **What can be done about it?**

Symptoms can be relieved by removing excess fluid. This can be done by taking drugs called diuretics (most commonly spironolactone). However, this is not always possible because the diuretics may take too long to start working or stop working or they may have unacceptable side effects. The quickest way to remove the fluid is to drain the fluid using a plastic drainage tube inserted into the abdomen. This procedure is called paracentesis.

### **What should I do when I think I need fluid draining from my abdomen?**

You should **ring the liver helpline 0151 430 1981**. If a nurse is not available to speak to you immediately, leave a message and a contact number and they will return your call as soon as possible. You will be given a date to attend for the procedure. You will have been asked to attend for blood tests in the week prior to the procedure.

## **What will happen on the day of the procedure?**

- The procedure will be carried out on **ward 3D** treatment unit. On the day of your procedure, **please arrive on the ward at your agreed appointment time.**
- When you arrive you will be seen by the Gastroenterology Nurse Specialist who will ask you a few questions and be able to answer any questions you may have.
- For the procedure you will be lying on a bed/ bed trolley.
- An intravenous drip will be inserted to give you some albumin (one of the body's proteins) while the fluid is draining.
- The nurse will examine you and decide on the best position to insert the drain into your abdomen.
- You will be given an injection of local anaesthetic before the drain is inserted
- The drain will be left in place for up to 8 hours.
- When the drain is removed a dressing will be applied to the area and should be left in place for 48 hours and kept as dry as possible.

## **Do I have to stay in hospital overnight?**

- Most patients come to the hospital in the morning of the procedure and go home at the end of the day. The fluid will be drained gradually, so you should expect to be in hospital for at least 8 hours.
- If you become unwell during the procedure an overnight stay will be arranged.

## **What are the risks?**

- Abdominal drain insertion is a safe procedure. Like any procedure there is a possibility of complications and side effects.

- The most common side effect is a feeling of tiredness after the procedure. Some patients may experience a slight increase in abdominal discomfort.
- Less commonly, there may be some leakage at the drain site for up to 72 hours after the procedure. Very occasionally there may be bleeding from the drain site.
- A very rare complication can include the introduction of infection into the abdominal cavity or damage to one of the intra-abdominal organs (e.g. gut, liver, spleen)

### **What should I do if I have problems after the procedure?**

- You may experience leakage from the drain site. If leakage continues 48–72 hours after removal of the drain tube, you should let us know immediately. You may require a small stitch to stop the site from leaking any further.
- Very rarely, people get an infection in the abdominal cavity through the insertion site. Let us know if you feel feverish, unwell or notice any redness, swelling or pain around the site.
- Out of hours in an emergency attend A&E

#### **Contact us**

If you have any questions or concerns about having an abdominal drain procedure, please contact:

The Liver Nurses on the **Liver Line Tel: 0151 430 1981**

Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 4.30 pm

**This Leaflet can be made available in alternative languages / formats on request.**

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