

## Free Prescriptions

All cancer patients undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment can apply for an exemption certificate for a free prescription from their GP.

## How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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# Malignant Ascites and Paracentesis

## Patient Information leaflet

This leaflet contains information about the treatment of a build up of fluid within the abdomen

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please ask for assistance.

Author: This leaflet has been adapted from AP-001 'Ascites and Paracentesis'  
Approved by PEG February 2012

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Safe & compassionate care,

every time

## Please Note:

This leaflet explains some of the most common side-effects that some people may experience. However, it is not comprehensive. If you experience other side-effects and want to ask anything else related to your treatment please speak to:

### The Gynae-oncology CNS

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on 01296 316863 (answer phone available)

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Monday – Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm

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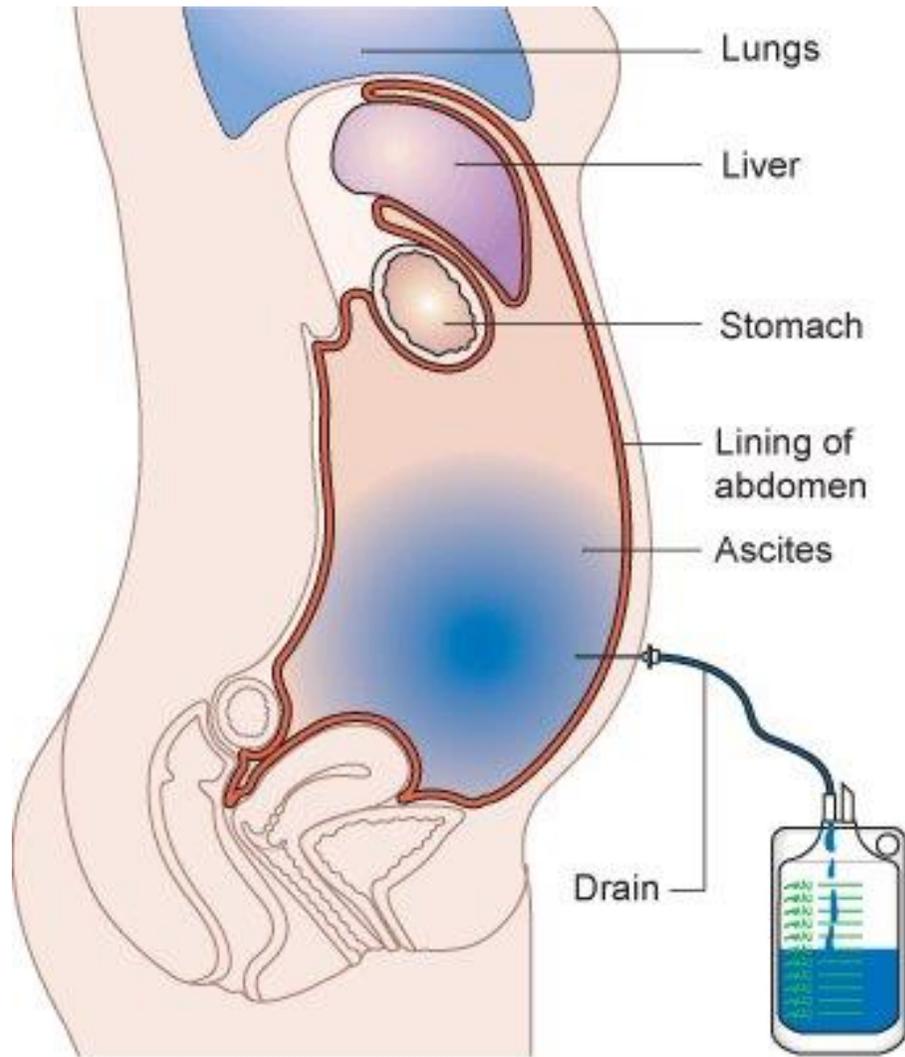


Diagram showing fluid (ascites) being drained from the abdomen  
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## Do I have to stay in hospital overnight?

You will be assessed by one of the doctors/senior nurses and providing the procedure has gone smoothly, and there is a responsible adult to take you home, it should be possible for most patients to return home the same day.

## Who do I contact if I have problems after the procedure?

You will receive a personalised discharge letter to take home, which you should keep in case you need to call an out-of-hours doctor or A&E Department.

After you go home you may have some discomfort, and it may be useful to have a small supply of paracetamol, (eg panadol) or ibuprofen (eg 'nurofen') available to take at home in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

If you have any questions or problems after the procedure, please contact:

## The Gynae-oncology CNS (Nurse Specialist)

**on 01296 316863 Monday – Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm**

**If the matter is more urgent please call your out-of-hours GP/NHS DIRECT OR COME TO THE A&E AT STOKE MANDEVILLE HOSPITAL.**

You may be asked to attend the ward or be advised to seek further advice and treatment from your GP practice.

## What is ascites?

Ascites is a medical term for the build up of fluid within the abdomen.

## Causes of ascites

There are many causes of ascites. The most common gynaecological cause being ovarian/primary peritoneal cancer. Cancer cells can irritate the lining of the abdomen and cause fluid to build up.

## Symptoms of ascites

The symptoms of ascites can be very distressing and include distention of the abdomen which can be painful and uncomfortable. Other symptoms can include:

- poor appetite
- shortness of breath
- indigestion
- constipation or diarrhoea
- nausea and vomiting
- reduced mobility and change in body shape

## Treatment

A quick and effective way to remove the fluid is to drain the ascites through a fine plastic tube inserted into the abdomen, this is called 'paracentesis'. This procedure can be carried out whilst you are waiting for surgery/chemotherapy or as a palliative treatment.

Prior to draining the ascites we will ask you to have a blood test to check your clotting is satisfactory to proceed with the paracentesis.

## Paracentesis

- We carry out the paracentesis in the X-ray department at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and Wycombe Hospital.
- You are transferred to the Recovery area in the X-ray department or occasionally admitted overnight.
- For the procedure, you will be lying on a bed.
- After scanning the abdomen the doctor will examine you to decide the best place to insert the drain into your abdomen.
- The doctor will give you an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area before inserting the drain.
- You will have your blood pressure checked regularly after the procedure.

Some people require fluids through a vein during the procedure, if they have become dehydrated. We encourage you to drink high energy fluids throughout the procedure.

- The drain will stay in for up to 4 - 6 hours before it is removed.
- You will be given some dressings to be placed over the area which should remain in place for 48 hours, and be kept as dry as possible.

There is a possibility that you may require this procedure more than once as ascites can recur.

## Side effects

The most common side effect after the procedure is a feeling of tiredness and some patients have a slight increase in their abdominal pain.

Sometimes the fluid continues to leak from the puncture site for up to 72 hours after the procedure. This may require a single stitch and you should contact:

## **The CNS in the Cancer Care and Haematology Unit on 01296 316863**

if there is ongoing significant leakage for more than 48 hours.

## Complications/risks

Very occasionally, patients may bleed from the drain site, develop low blood pressure.

The warning signs of bleeding can include:

- feeling light headed or faint
- low blood pressure
- nausea.

The warning signs of infection are:

- fever
- shivering
- raised temperature
- sweating
- feeling generally unwell.

If you experience any of these symptoms, we advise that you contact your GP immediately or out-of-hours GP Service, or go to the nearest A&E Department. It is rare that any complications arise following this procedure.