Thoracentesis

What is a thoracentesis?

A thoracentesis is a procedure to remove fluid from the space around your lung. The fluid may be removed to help you breathe easier or to examine it in the laboratory. Medicines can be put into the space if needed.

How do I get ready for a thoracentesis?

- Talk to your doctor about any medicines you take to thin your blood or prevent clots. You may need to change these medicines or adjust the amount you take before this procedure. These medicines include:
  - Aspirin
  - Clopidogrel, brand name Plavix
  - Prasugrel, brand name Effient
  - Ticagrelor, brand name Brilinta
  - Ticlopidine, brand name Ticlid
  - Warfarin, brand name Coumadin
  - Enoxaparin, brand name Lovenox
  - Dabigatran, brand name Pradaxa

More on next page ➔
Before the procedure begins, go to the bathroom and empty your bladder.

Your temperature, heart rate and blood pressure may be checked.

Blood may be taken for testing to be sure you will not bleed too much during the procedure.

When the lab test results are available, you will be taken to ultrasound to have a picture taken to show where the largest pocket of fluid is located. Your skin will be marked to show the spot where the needle should enter the skin.

You will be taken back to the procedure room.

What will happen during thoracentesis?

You will be asked to sit on the edge of your bed. You may lean forward on a pillow placed on a bedside table.

The doctor or nurse practitioner will clean the skin around your lower ribs with a cool liquid soap. A numbing medicine will then be injected into this area.

A needle is put into the space between two ribs. The needle will be advanced into the space around your lung. You may feel some discomfort as the needle moves into this space. Take slow, deep breaths and try not to move. Fluid is drained from the space. You may feel like coughing, but try to avoid it.

When the needle is removed, you may be asked to hold your breath.

A dressing or bandage will be put over the puncture site.

If you have a stent, do not stop taking your medicines to prevent clots without first talking to the doctor who put in the stent. Read the handout, Protect Your Stent, to learn more.
A chest x-ray will be done to check to be sure there is no problem from the procedure. You will be asked to wait until the results of the x-ray have been reviewed before you can leave.

What will happen after the thoracentesis?

- Limit your activity for the rest of the day. Avoid lifting or pushing more than 10 pounds for 1 to 2 days after the procedure.
- If you feel more short of breath than usual, tell your nurse or doctor right away.
- You may return to work after 24 hours, unless your doctor instructs you otherwise.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.