

# Thoracocentesis

*Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.*

## **What is Thoracocentesis?**

During pregnancy, doctors use special techniques to check the baby's health and see if there are any concerns. Thoracocentesis is ultrasound guided needle puncture of the fetal chest. This is done to drain and sample unusual fluid in the fetal chest, i.e. fetal pleural effusion. This test helps doctors know how your baby is doing and if everything is going well with the pregnancy.

## **Why is Thoracocentesis performed?**

Your doctor will explain why they recommend thoracocentesis for your baby. This test is done when there's too much fluid in the baby's chest, a condition known as hydrothorax. Removing some of this fluid can help doctors figure out why it's there (a diagnostic procedure) or help relieve any pressure on the baby's lungs ( a therapeutic procedure).

Sometimes, this extra fluid is the only issue (primary hydrothorax), but it can also happen along with other conditions affecting the baby (secondary hydrothorax).

## **When is Thoracocentesis performed?**

Thoracocentesis is a procedure that doctors may recommend at different times during pregnancy, depending on the fetal condition. Your doctor will discuss the best time for thoracocentesis if it's considered necessary for your baby's health.

## **What should I expect during the procedure?**

Most often this procedure is performed with the mother awake. Pain relief will be provided. As it involves a small needle then local anaesthetic may be the only thing required. This means the insertion of the needle into the abdomen is much more comfortable but you should still expect a sharp and cramping sensation when the needle enters the uterus (womb). Pleural fluid can be drawn and sent to the laboratory for special testing.

## **What should I expect after the procedure?**

After the procedure, patients may feel some mild discomfort or the urge to urinate. Very often a follow up scan will be done before you leave the department. The doctor will give instructions on the follow-up care needed. There might be mild bruising or soreness at the puncture site afterward, and the doctor will offer instructions for any additional care required including problems to look out for such as vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking from the vagina.

## **Is there any Follow-up appointment?**

Yes, and It's important to attend your appointments as advised by your doctor. This allows you to talk to your healthcare provider about the results of your procedure and any next steps or treatments that might be needed.

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