

Pleural Aspiration

This leaflet explains pleural aspiration including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is pleural aspiration?

Pleural aspiration is a procedure to remove fluid from the space between the lung and the chest wall. This potential space is called the pleural space. In some conditions the fluid may build up and this is called a pleural effusion. This can put pressure on the lungs making it difficult to breathe.

Why should I have pleural aspiration?

Pleural aspiration is needed to try and find the cause of pleural effusion and sometimes it helps to improve breathing.

What are the risks?

Like any procedure there might be some risks but they can be easily treated.

- Pneumothorax, this is when air collects in the pleural space. This can heal by itself but sometimes we need to insert a chest drain to resolve it. This complication is rare when the procedure is done under ultrasound guidance.
- Pain, bleeding and infection (in less than six per cent of cases).
- Failure. We may not feel it is safe to proceed if the effusion is too small when we review it or we may not get enough information from the samples sent to make a clear diagnosis.

Are there any alternatives?

If your doctor needs a sample of the fluid to treat you efficiently this is the only option.

How can I prepare for pleural aspiration?

No special preparation is needed. Please inform your nurse or doctor if you are taking any anticoagulant (blood thinners) and they will advise you accordingly. Please advise us if you have any allergies.

Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes'

previously. If you would like more details about this, please ask for a copy of our policy.

What happens during pleural aspiration?

The procedure will take 10 to 15 minutes. You will be in a comfortable sitting position and the doctor / nurse will clean your skin to minimise the risk of infection. You will have an ultrasound scan to find the right spot to insert the needle. The site will be anaesthetised and the doctor / specialist nurse will insert the needle into the pleural space. Once the fluid is removed you will have a small dressing in place which can be removed on the following day.

Will I feel any pain?

We will anaesthetise the skin and if you feel any discomfort you can ask the doctor / specialist nurse to give you more. Please talk to the team about your experience as this will help us to provide a better care for our patients.

What happens after the procedure?

When the procedure is complete, we will send a sample of the fluid to the laboratory to see what is the cause of the pleural effusion. You will be discharged home once you are stable and you can eat and drink as normal. Many people feel better after fluid is removed. Once the result is available, we will be in contact with you and will arrange an appointment to come back and discuss the result and further treatment.

What do I need to do after I go home?

When you are at home if you have any breathing problems please contact your GP or 111.

Useful sources of information

for more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure, please contact the Pleural CNS on 020 8725 3210 or call 020 8672 1255 and ask for bleep 7809 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, please go to A&E.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm
Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.
The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.
PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

