

Drainage guided by CT or ultrasound

This fact sheet tells you what a computed tomography (CT-) or ultrasound-guided drainage procedure is, and what is involved. Please read this sheet before having this procedure. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is CT- or ultrasound-guided drainage?

A CT- or ultrasound-guided drainage is a medical imaging test that uses X-rays or ultrasound to take images of areas in your body where unwanted fluid has collected.

The radiologist (a specialist doctor) uses the images to guide them to drain the fluid.

What is involved?

You will be given instructions on how to prepare for this procedure. **Before the scan you should tell your doctor and the imaging staff if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.**

The decision to use CT or ultrasound will depend on your needs. If a CT scanner is used for this procedure, you will receive a small dose of radiation while lying inside the scanner. If an ultrasound machine is used, you will be lying on a table and a small plastic probe (which uses sound waves) will be placed over the area of interest to guide the radiologist.

For the drainage, your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic and numbed with local anaesthetic. With the help of the CT or the ultrasound images, the radiologist will insert a tube (drain or catheter) through your skin into the area with the collected fluid to allow it to drain from your body into a bag or container. The tube will be held in place by a special tape.

What happens after the procedure?

This procedure is usually performed on hospital inpatients. If you are going home after your procedure you will be provided with special after care instructions. Nurses on your ward will keep checking your pulse, blood pressure and temperature to make sure that there are no problems.

You should take care with the drain tube and bag, and not make any sudden movements. The bag should also be able to move freely with you.

The bag might need to be emptied occasionally, so that it does not become too heavy or full. Before emptying the bag, the nurses may measure the amount of fluid collected.

Are there any risks?

CT- or ultrasound-guided drainage is usually a safe procedure, but there are a few risks or problems that may arise, such as:

- the drainage tube might not be placed properly in the collection bag
- there is a small risk that your skin may become infected where the tube enters your body – this might need treatment with antibiotics
- there might be some bleeding around the area where the tube enters your body – this can occasionally be severe enough to need a blood transfusion
- occasionally the tube falls out – if so, the procedure may have to be repeated.

Any radiation exposure will be kept to a minimum. The dose of radiation used in a CT scan is generally small and rarely produces harmful effects. If you have many CTs, there is a slight increase in the lifetime risk of cancer.

For more information

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: www.insideradiology.com.au

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: www.radiologyinfo.org

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: www.arpansa.gov.au

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